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THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

VOL. II.

Drawn by J. D. Harding on the spot. Engraved by W

Lucy

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Just undulates upon the listening ear."

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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER

HIS

LIFE AND LETTERS

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY ESQ.

NOW FIRST COMPLETED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF

COWPER'S PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

EDITED BY

THE REV. T. S. GRIMSHAWE, A.M.

RECTOR OF BURTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND VICAR OF BIDDENHAM, BEDFORDSHIRE, AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. LEGH RICHMOND.

Letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment the best. LORD BACON.

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THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

Part the First—Continued.

ε have now conducted Cowper to the threshold fame, with all its attendant hopes, fears, and ɔieties; a fame resting on the noblest foundation, : application of the powers of genius to the im-ɔvement of the age in which he lived. The cir-nstances under which he commenced his career an Author are singular. They form a profitable ;ject of inquiry to those who analyze the opera-ıs of the human mind; for he wrote in the mo-nts of depression and sorrow, under the influence a morbid temperament, and with an imagination ailed by the most afflicting images. In the lst of these discouragements his mind burst th from its prison-house, arrayed in all the ırms of wit and humour, sportive without levity, l never provoking a smile at the expense of :ue.

A mind so constituted furnishes a remarkable

proof of the wisdom and goodness of God; for it shews that the greatest trials are not without their alleviations, and that in the bitterest cup are to be found the ingredients of mercy. Who can tell how often the mind might lose its equilibrium, or sink under the pressure of its woes, were it not for the interposition of that Almighty Power which guides the planets in their orbits, and says to the great water, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Job xxxviii. 11.

We now resume the correspondence of Cowper, which contains some incidental notices of his admired Poems of Friendship and Retirement.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Dec. 17, 1781.

My dear Friend—The poem I had in hand when I wrote last is on the subject of Friendship. By the following post I received a packet from Johnson. The proof-sheet it contained brought our business down to the latter part of "Retirement;" the next will consequently introduce the first of the smaller pieces. The volume consisting, at least four-fifths of it, of heroic verse as it is called, and graver matter, I was desirous to displace the "Burning Mountain" † from the post it held in the van of the light infantry, and throw it into the rear. Having

* Private Correspondence.

† The poem afterwards entitled "Heroism."—Vide Poems, vol. i.

finished "Friendship," and fearing that, if I delayed to send it, the press would get the start of my intention, and knowing perfectly that, with respect to the subject and the subject matter of it, it contained nothing that you would think exceptionable, I took the liberty to transmit it to Johnson, and hope that the next post will return it to me printed. It consists of between thirty and forty stanzas; a length that qualifies it to supply the place of the two cancelled pieces, without the aid of the epistle I mentioned. According to the present arrangement, therefore, "Friendship," which is rather of a lively cast, though quite sober, will follow next after "Retirement," and "Ætna" will close the volume. Modern naturalists, I think, tell us that the volcano forms the mountain. I shall be charged therefore, perhaps, with an unphilosophical error in supposing that Ætna was once unconscious of intestine fires, and as lofty as at present before the commencement of the eruptions. It is possible, however, that the rule, though just in some instances, may not be of universal application; and, if it be, I do not know that a poet is obliged to write with a philosopher at his elbow, prepared always to bend down his imagination to mere matters of fact. You will oblige me by your opinion; and tell me, if you please, whether you think an apologetical note may be necessary; for I would not appear a dunce in matters that every Review reader must needs be apprized of. I say a note, because an alteration of the piece is impracticable; at least without cutting off its head, and setting on a new one; a task I

should not readily undertake, because the lines which must, in that case, be thrown out, are some of the most poetical in the performance.

Possessing greater advantages, and being equally dissolute with the most abandoned of the neighbouring nations, we are certainly more criminal than they. They *cannot* see, and we *will* not. It is to be expected, therefore, that when judgment is walking through the earth, it will come commissioned with the heaviest tidings to the people chargeable with the most perverseness. In the latter part of the Duke of Newcastle's administration, all faces gathered blackness. The people, as they walked the streets, had, every one of them, a countenance like what we may suppose to have been the prophet Jonah's, when he cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." But our Nineveh too repented, that is to say, she was affected in a manner somewhat suitable to her condition. She was dejected; she learned an humbler language, and seemed, if she did not trust in God, at least to have renounced her confidence in herself. A respite ensued; the expected ruin was averted; and her prosperity became greater than ever. Again she became self-conceited and proud, as at the first; and how stands it with our Nineveh now? Even as you say; her distress is infinite, her destruction appears inevitable, and her heart as hard as the nether millstone. Thus, I suppose, it was when ancient Nineveh found herself agreeably disappointed; she turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and that flagrant abuse of mercy exposed her, at the

expiration of forty years, to the complete execution of a sentence she had only been threatened with before. A similarity of events, accompanied by a strong similarity of conduct, seems to justify our expectations that the catastrophe will not be very different. But, after all, the designs of Providence are inscrutable, and, as in the case of individuals, so in that of nations, the same causes do not always produce the same effects. The country indeed cannot be saved in its present state of profligacy and profaneness, but may, nevertheless, be led to repentance by means we are little aware of, and at a time when we least expect it.

Our best love attends yourself and Mrs. Newton, and we rejoice that you feel no burthens but those you bear in common with the liveliest and most favoured Christians. It is a happiness in poor Peggy's case that she can swallow five shillings' worth of physic in a day, but a person must be in her case to be duly sensible of it.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*

Olney, Dec. 19, 1781.

My dear William—I dare say I do not enter exactly into your idea of a present theocracy, because mine amounts to no more than the common one, that all mankind, though few are really aware

* Private Correspondence.

of it, act under a providential direction, and that a gracious superintendence in particular is the lot of those who trust in God. Thus I think respecting individuals, and with respect to the kingdoms of the earth, that, perhaps, by his own immediate operation, though more probably by the intervention of angels, (vide Daniel,) the great Governor manages and rules them, assigns them their origin, duration, and end, appoints them prosperity or adversity, glory or disgrace, as their virtues or their vices, their regard to the dictates of conscience and his word, or their prevailing neglect of both, may indicate and require. But in this persuasion, as I said, I do not at all deviate from the general opinion of those who believe a Providence, at least who have a scriptural belief of it. I suppose, therefore, you mean something more, and shall be glad to be more particularly informed.

I see but one feature in the face of our national concerns that pleases me;—the war with America, it seems, is to be conducted on a different plan. This is something; when a long series of measures, of a certain description, has proved unsuccessful, the adoption of others is at least pleasing, as it encourages a hope that they may possibly prove wiser and more effectual: but, indeed, without discipline, all is lost. Pitt himself could have done nothing with such tools; but he would not have been so betrayed; he would have made the traitors answer with their heads for their cowardice or supineness, and their punishment would have made survivors active. W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney. The shortest day, 1781.

My dear Friend—I might easily make this letter a continuation of my last, another national miscarriage having furnished me with a fresh illustration of the remarks we have both been making. Mr. S——, who has most obligingly supplied me with franks throughout my whole concern with Johnson, accompanied the last parcel he sent me with a note dated from the House of Commons, in which he seemed happy to give me the earliest intelligence of the capture of the French transports by Admiral Kempenfelt, and of a close engagement between the two fleets, so much to be expected. This note was written on Monday, and reached me by Wednesday's post; but, alas! the same post brought us the newspaper that informed us of his being forced to fly before a much superior enemy, and glad to take shelter in the port he had left so lately. This event, I suppose, will have worse consequences than the mere disappointment; will furnish Opposition, as all our ill success has done, with the fuel of dissension, and with the means of thwarting and perplexing administration. Thus, all we purchase with the many millions expended yearly is distress to ourselves, instead of our enemies, and domestic quarrels instead of victories abroad. It takes a great many blows to knock down a great nation; and, in the case of poor England, a great many heavy ones have not been wanting. They make us

* Private Correspondence.

reel and stagger indeed, but the blow is not yet struck that is to make us fall upon our knees. That fall would save us; but, if we fall upon our side at last, we are undone. So much for politics.

I enclose a few lines on a thought which struck me yesterday.* If you approve of them, you know what to do with them. I should think they might occupy the place of an introduction, and should call them by that name, if I did not judge the name I have given them necessary for the information of the reader. A flatting-mill is not met with in every street, and my book will, perhaps, fall into the hands of many who do not know that such a mill was ever invented. It happened to me however to spend much of my time in one, when I was a boy, when I frequently amused myself with watching the operation I describe.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

The reader will admire the sublimity of the following letter in allusion to England and America.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.†

Olney. The last day of 1781.

My dear Friend—Yesterday's post, which brought me yours, brought me a packet from Johnson. We have reached the middle of the Mahometan Hog.

* The lines alluded to are entitled, "The Flatting Mill, an Illustration."—Vide Poems, vol. iii.

† Private Correspondence.

By the way, your lines, which, when we had the pleasure of seeing you here, you said you would furnish him with, are not inserted in it. I did not recollect, till after I had finished the "Flatting Mill," that it bore any affinity to the motto taken from Caraccioli. The resemblance, however, did not appear to me to give any impropriety to the verses, as the thought is much enlarged upon, and enlivened by the addition of a new comparison. But if it is not wanted, it is superfluous, and if superfluous better omitted. I shall not bumble Johnson for finding fault with "Friendship," though I have a better opinion of it myself; but a poet is of all men the most unfit to be judge in his own cause. Partial to all his productions, he is always most partial to the youngest. But, as there is a sufficient quantity without it, let that sleep too. If I should live to write again, I may possibly take up that subject a second time, and clothe it in a different dress. It abounds with excellent matter, and much more than I could find room for in two or three pages.

I consider England and America as once one country. They were so, in respect of interest, intercourse, and affinity. A great earthquake has made a partition, and now the Atlantic Ocean flows between them. He that can drain that ocean, and shove the two shores together, so as to make them aptly coincide, and meet each other in every part, can unite them again. But this is a work for Omnipotence, and nothing less than Omnipotence can heal the breach between us. This dispensation is evidently a scourge to England; but is it a blessing

to America? Time may prove it one, but at present it does not seem to wear an aspect favourable to their privileges, either civil or religious. I cannot doubt the truth of Dr. W.'s assertion; but the French, who pay but little regard to treaties that clash with their convenience, without a treaty, and even in direct contradiction to verbal engagements, can easily pretend a claim to a country which they have both bled and paid for; and, if the validity of that claim be disputed, behold an army ready landed, and well-appointed, and in possession of some of the most fruitful provinces, prepared to prove it. A scourge is a scourge at one end only. A bundle of thunderbolts, such as you have seen in the talons of Jupiter's eagle, is at both ends equally tremendous, and can inflict a judgment upon the West, at the same moment that it seems to intend only the chastisement of the East.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

Dr. Johnson's celebrated work, "The Lives of the Poets," had at this time made its appearance, and some of the following letters refer to that subject.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 5, 1782.

My dear Friend—Did I allow myself to plead the common excuse of idle correspondents, and esteem it a sufficient reason for not writing that I have

nothing to write about, I certainly should not write now. But I have so often found, on similar occasions, when a great penury of matter has seemed to threaten me with an utter impossibility of hatching a letter, that nothing is necessary but to put pen to paper, and go on, in order to conquer all difficulties; that, availing myself of past experience, I now begin with a most assured persuasion that, sooner or later, one idea naturally suggesting another, I shall come to a most prosperous conclusion.

In the last "Review," I mean in the last but one, I saw Johnson's critique upon Prior and Pope. I am bound to acquiesce in his opinion of the latter, because it has always been my own. I could never agree with those who preferred him to Dryden, nor with others (I have known such, and persons of taste and discernment too) who could not allow him to be a poet at all. He was certainly a mechanical maker of verses, and, in every line he ever wrote, we see indubitable marks of most indefatigable industry and labour. Writers, who find it necessary to make such strenuous and painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic as they are correct; but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with the most minute exactness, he had all the genius of one of the first masters. Never, I believe, were such talents and such drudgery united. But I admire Dryden most, who has succeeded by mere dint of genius, and in spite of a laziness and carelessness almost peculiar to himself. His faults

are numberless, and so are his beauties. His faults are those of a great man, and his beauties are such (at least sometimes) as Pope, with all his touching and re-touching, could never equal. So far, therefore, I have no quarrel with Johnson. But I cannot subscribe to what he says of Prior. In the first place, though my memory may fail me, I do not recollect that he takes any notice of his Solomon, in my mind the best poem, whether we consider the subject of it or the execution, that he ever wrote.* In the next place, he condemns him for introducing Venus and Cupid into his love verses, and concludes it impossible his passion could be sincere, because, when he would express it, he has recourse to fables. But, when Prior wrote, those deities were not so obsolete as they are at present. His cotemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence, as much as we do; yet Tibullus is allowed to be the prince of all poetical inamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things which the Doctor seems to have forgotten. But what shall we say of his rusty-fusty remarks upon Henry and Emma? I agree with him, that, mo-

* This remark is inaccurate. Prior's Solomon is distinctly mentioned, though Johnson observes that it fails in exciting interest. His concluding remarks are, however, highly honourable to the merit of that work. "He that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages, to which he may recur for instruction or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason."—*Life of Prior.*—EDITOR.

rally considered, both the knight and his lady are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way that would have justified the woman had she renounced him, and the woman resolves to follow him at the expense of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him? There are few readers of poetry of either sex in this country who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them, who do not know that, instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it as to have overlooked all its defects, and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories without ever feeling it a burthen. I wonder almost, that as the bacchanals served Orpheus, the boys and girls do not tear this husky, dry commentator, limb from limb, in resentment of such an injury done to their darling poet. I admire Johnson as a man of great erudition and sense, but, when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification.

The next packet I receive will bring me, I imagine, the last proof sheet of my volume, which will consist of about three hundred and fifty pages, honestly printed. My public *entrée* therefore is not far distant. Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Jan. 13, 1782.

My dear Friend—I believe I did not thank you for your anecdotes, either foreign or domestic, in my last, therefore I do it now; and still feel myself, as I did at the time, truly obliged to you for them. More is to be learned from one matter of fact than from a thousand speculations. But, alas! what course can Government take! I have heard (for I never made the experiment) that if a man grasp a red-hot iron with his naked hand, it will stick to him, so that he cannot presently disengage himself from it. Such are the colonies in the hands of administration. While they hold them they burn their fingers, and yet they must not quit them. I know not whether your sentiments and mine upon this part of the subject exactly coincide, but you will know when you understand what mine are. It appears to me that the King is bound, both by the duty he owes to himself and to his people, to consider himself, with respect to every inch of his territories, as a trustee deriving his interest in them from God, and invested with them by divine authority for the benefit of his subjects. As he may not sell them or waste them, so he may not resign them to an enemy, or transfer his right to govern them to any, not even to themselves, so long as it is possible for him to keep it. If he does, he

* Private Correspondence.

trays at once his own interest and that of his her dominions. It may be said, suppose Province has ordained that they shall be wrested from m, how then? I answer, that cannot appear to the case, till God's purpose is actually accomished; and in the mean time the most probable ospect of such an event does not release him om his obligation to hold them to the last moment, rasmuch as adverse appearances are no infallible dication of God's designs, but may give place to ore comfortable symptoms, when we least expect . Viewing the thing in this light, if I sat on his [ajesty's throne, I should be as obstinate as he,* ecause, if I quitted the contest while I had any eans left of carrying it on, I should never know iat I had not relinquished what I might have reined, or be able to render a satisfactory answer to ie doubts and inquiries of my own conscience.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 17, 1782.

My dear William—I am glad we agree in our pinion of king critic,† and the writers on whom he

* The retention of the American colonies was known to be favourite project with George III; but the sense of the ation was opposed to the war, and the expense and reverses ttending its prosecution increased the public discontent.

† Dr. Johnson.

has bestowed his animadversions. It is a matter of indifference to me whether I think with the world at large or not, but I wish my friends to be of my mind. The same work will wear a different appearance in the eyes of the same man, according to the different views with which he reads it; if merely for his amusement, his candour being in less danger of a twist from interest or prejudice, he is pleased with what is really pleasing, and is not over-curious to discover a blemish, because the exercise of a minute exactness is not consistent with his purpose. But if he once becomes a critic by trade, the case is altered. He must then, at any rate, establish, if he can, an opinion in every mind of his uncommon discernment, and his exquisite taste. This great end he can never accomplish by thinking in the track that has been beaten under the hoof of public judgment. He must endeavour to convince the world that their favourite authors have more faults than they are aware of, and such as they have never suspected. Having marked out a writer universally esteemed, whom he finds it for that very reason convenient to depreciate and traduce, he will overlook some of his beauties, he will faintly praise others, and in such a manner as to make thousands, more modest though quite as judicious as himself, question whether they are beauties at all. Can there be a stronger illustration of all that I have said than the severity of Johnson's remarks upon Prior—I might have said the injustice? His reputation as an author, who, with much labour indeed, but with admirable success,

has embellished all his poems with the most charming ease, stood unshaken till Johnson thrust his head against it. And how does he attack him in this his principal fort? I cannot recollect his very words, but I am much mistaken indeed, if my memory fails me with respect to the purport of them. "His words," he says, "appear to be forced into their proper places. There indeed we find them, but find likewise that their arrangement has been the effect of constraint, and that without violence they would certainly have stood in a different order."* By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curl or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic, to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish

* The language in the original is as follows: "His expression has every mark of laborious study; the line seldom seems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by constraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it sullenly."—See *Lives of the Poets.*

this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for it so long, that he is an easy writer indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it; in short, that his ease is not ease, but only something like it, what is it but a self-contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted, in the same sentence, and in the same breath?—But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say that, as a nation, we are not much indebted, in point of poetical credit, to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge; and that, for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon and exhausted the labours of his office, before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them.

[That Johnson, in his 'Lives of the Poets,' has exhibited many instances of erroneous criticism, and that he sometimes censures where he might have praised, is we believe very generally admitted. His treatment of Swift, Gay, Prior, and Gray, has excited regret; and Milton, though justly extolled as a sublime poet, is lashed as a republican, with unrelenting severity. Few will concur in Johnson's remarks on Gray's celebrated "Progress of Poetry;" and Murphy, in speaking of his critique on the well-known and admired opening of "The Bard,"

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless king," &c.

expresses a wish that it had been blotted out.* But Johnson was the Jupiter Tonans of literature, and not unfrequently hurls his thunder and darts his lightning with an air of conscious superiority, which, though it awakens terror by its power, does not always command respect for its judgment.

With all these deductions, the "Lives of the Poets" is a work abounding in inimitable beauties, and is a lasting memorial of Johnson's fame. It has been justly characterized as "the most brilliant, and, certainly, the most popular, of all his writings."† The most splendid passage, among many that might be quoted, is perhaps the eloquent comparison instituted between the relative merits of Pope and Dryden. As Cowper alludes to this critique with satisfaction, we insert an extract from it, to gratify those who are not familiar with its existence. Speaking of Dryden, Johnson observes, "His mind has a larger range, and he collects his images and illustrations from a more extensive circumference of science. Dryden knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners. The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation; and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope." Again: "Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abun-

* See Murphy's "Essay on the Genius of Dr. Johnson."

† Ibid.

dant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller."

"Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden had more; for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope; and even of Dryden it must be said that, if he has brighter paragraphs, he has not better poems."

He concludes this brilliant comparison in the following words. "If the flights of Dryden, therefore, are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing; if of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight."*

We now insert the sequel of the preceding letter to Mr. Unwin.]

You have already furnished John's memory with by far the greatest part of what a parent would wish to store it with. If all that is merely trivial, and all that has an immoral tendency, were expunged from our English poets, how would they shrink, and how would some of them completely vanish! I believe there are some of Dryden's Fa-

* See "Life of Pope."

bles, which he would find very entertaining; they are for the most part fine compositions, and not above his apprehension; but Dryden has written few things that are not blotted here and there with an unchaste allusion, so that you must pick his way for him, lest he should tread in the dirt. You did not mention Milton's "Allegro" and "Penseroso,'" which I remember being so charmed with when a boy, that I was never weary of them. There are even passages in the paradisiacal part of "Paradise Lost," which he might study with advantage. And to teach him, as you can, to deliver some of the fine orations made in the Pandæmonium, and those between Satan, Ithuriel, and Zephon, with emphasis, dignity, and propriety, might be of great use to him hereafter. The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice, which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think too that Thomson's "Seasons" might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a tendency to give his mind an observing and a philosophical turn. I do not forget that he is but a child, but I remember that he is a child favoured with talents superior to his years. We were much pleased with his remarks on your alms-giving, and doubt not but it will be verified with respect to the two guineas you sent us, which have made four Christian people happy. Ships I have none, nor have touched a pencil these three years; if ever I take it up again, which I rather suspect I shall

not, (the employment requiring stronger eyes than mine,) it shall be at John's service.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Jan. 31, 1782.

My dear Friend—Having thanked you for a barrel of very fine oysters, I should have nothing more to say, if I did not determine to say every thing that may happen to occur. The political world affords us no very agreeable subjects at present, nor am I sufficiently conversant with it to do justice to so magnificent a theme, if it did. A man that lives as I do, whose chief occupation, at this season of the year, is to walk ten times in a day from the fire-side to his cucumber frame and back again, cannot shew his wisdom more, if he has any wisdom to shew, than by leaving the mysteries of government to the management of persons, in point of situation and information, much better qualified for the business. Suppose not, however, that I am perfectly an unconcerned spectator, or that I take no interest at all in the affairs of the country; far from it—I read the news—I see that things go wrong in every quarter. I meet, now and then, with an account of some disaster that seems to be the indisputable progeny of treachery, cowardice, or a spirit of faction; I recollect that in those hap-

* Private Correspondence.

pier days, when you and I could spend our evening in enumerating victories and acquisitions, that seemed to follow each other in a continued series, there was some pleasure in hearing a politician; and a man might talk away upon so entertaining a subject, without danger of becoming tiresome to others, or incurring weariness himself. When poor Bob White brought me the news of Boscawen's success off the coast of Portugal, how did I leap for joy! When Hawke demolished Conflans, I was still more transported. But nothing could express my rapture, when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec. I am not, therefore, I suppose, destitute of true patriotism; but the course of public events has, of late, afforded me no opportunity to exert it. I cannot rejoice, because I see no reason; and I will not murmur, because for that I can find no good one. And let me add, he that has seen both sides of fifty, has lived to little purpose, if he has not other views of the world than he had when he was much younger. He finds, if he reflects at all, that it will be to the end what it has been from the beginning, a shifting, uncertain, fluctuating scene; that nations, as well as individuals, have their seasons of infancy, youth, and age. If he be an Englishman, he will observe that ours, in particular, is affected with every symptom of decay, and is already sunk into a state of decrepitude. I am reading Mrs. Macaulay's History. I am not quite such a superannuated simpleton as to suppose that mankind were wiser or much better when I was young than they are now. But I may venture to

assert, without exposing myself to the charge of dotage, that the men whose integrity, courage, and wisdom, broke the bands of tyranny, established our constitution upon its true basis, and gave a people overwhelmed with the scorn of all countries an opportunity to emerge into a state of the highest respect and estimation, make a better figure in history than any of the present day are likely to do, when their petty harangues are forgotten, and nothing shall survive but the remembrance of the views and motives with which they made them.

My dear friend, I have written at random, in every sense, neither knowing what sentiments I should broach when I began, nor whether they would accord with yours. Excuse a rustic, if he errs on such a subject, and believe me sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 2, 1782.

My dear Friend—Though I value your correspondence highly on its own account, I certainly value it the more in consideration of the many difficulties under which you carry it on. Having so many other engagements, and engagements so much more worthy your attention, I ought to esteem it, as I do, a singular proof of your friendship that you so often make an opportunity to bestow a letter upon me; and this not only because mine, which I

.te in a state of mind not very favourable to re-
ous contemplations, are never worth your read-
, but especially because, while you consult my
.tification, and endeavour to amuse my melan-
ıly, your thoughts are forced out of the only
unnel in which they delight to flow, and con-
ained into another so different, and so little inte-
.ting to a mind like yours, that, but for me and
my sake, they would perhaps never visit it.
ıough I should be glad therefore to hear from
u every week, I do not complain that I enjoy
ıt privilege but once in a fortnight, but am rather
ppy to be indulged in it so often.

I thank you for the jog you gave Johnson's elbow;
nmunicated from him to the printer, it has pro-
ced me two more sheets, and two more will bring
: business, I suppose, to a conclusion. I some-
ıes feel such a perfect indifference, with respect
the public opinion of my book, that I am ready
flatter myself no censure of reviewers or other
tical readers would occasion me the smallest
turbance. But, not feeling myself constantly pos-
sed of this desirable apathy, I am sometimes apt
suspect that it is not altogether sincere, or at
st that I may lose it just at the moment when I
.y happen most to want it. Be it, however, as it
y, I am still persuaded that it is not in their
ver to mortify me much. I have intended well,
l performed to the best of my ability: so far was
ht, and this is a boast of which they cannot rob
. If they condemn my poetry, I must even say
h Cervantes, "Let them do better if they can!"

—if my doctrine, they judge that which they do not understand; I shall except to the jurisdiction of the court, and plead *Coram non judice.* Even Horace could say he should neither be the plumper for the praise nor the leaner for the condemnation of his readers; and it will prove me wanting to myself indeed, if, supported by so many sublimer considerations than he was master of, I cannot sit loose to popularity, which, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and is equally out of our command. If you, and two or three more such as you are, say, well done, it ought to give me more contentment than if I could earn Churchill's laurels, and by the same means.

I wrote to Lord Dartmouth to apprise him of my intended present, and have received a most affectionate and obliging answer.

I am rather pleased that you have adopted other sentiments respecting our intended present to the critical Doctor.* I allow him to be a man of gigantic talents and most profound learning, nor have I any doubts about the universality of his knowledge; but, by what I have seen of his animadversions on the poets, I feel myself much disposed to question, in many instances, either his candour or his taste. He finds fault too often, like a man that, having sought it very industriously, is at last obliged to stick it on a pin's point, and look at it through a microscope; and, I am sure, I could easily convict him of having denied many beauties and overlooked more. Whether his judgment be in

* Dr. Johnson.

itself defective, or whether it be warped by collateral considerations, a writer upon such subjects as I have chosen would probably find but little mercy at his hands.

No winter, since we knew Olney, has kept us more confined than the present. We have not more than three times escaped into the fields since last autumn. Man, a changeable creature in himself, seems to subsist best in a state of variety, as his proper element:—a melancholy man, at least, is apt to grow sadly weary of the same walks and the same pales, and to find that the same scene will suggest the same thoughts perpetually.

Though I have spoken of the utility of changes, we neither feel nor wish for any in our friendships, and consequently stand just where we did with respect to your whole self.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1782.

My dear Friend—I thank you for Mr. Lowth's verses. They are so good that, had I been present when he spoke them, I should have trembled for the boy, lest the man should disappoint the hopes such early genius had given birth to. It is not common to see so lively a fancy so correctly managed, and so free from irregular exuberance, at so

unexperienced an age, fruitful, yet not wanton, and gay without being tawdry. When schoolboys write verse, if they have any fire at all, it generally spends itself in flashes and transient sparks, which may indeed suggest an expectation of something better hereafter, but deserve not to be much commended for any real merit of their own. Their wit is generally forced and false, and their sublimity, if they affect any, bombast. I remember well when it was thus with me, and when a turgid, noisy, unmeaning speech in a tragedy, which I should now laugh at, afforded me raptures, and filled me with wonder. It is not in general till reading and observation have settled the taste that we can give the prize to the best writing in preference to the worst. Much less are we able to execute what is good ourselves. But Lowth seems to have stepped into excellence at once, and to have gained by intuition what we little folks are happy if we can learn at last, after much labour of our own and instruction of others. The compliments he pays to the memory of King Charles he would probably now retract, though he be a bishop, and his majesty's zeal for episcopacy was one of the causes of his ruin. An age or two must pass before some characters can be properly understood. The spirit of party employs itself in veiling their faults and ascribing to them virtues which they never possessed. See Charles's face drawn by Clarendon, and it is a handsome portrait. See it more justly exhibited by Mrs. Macaulay, and it is deformed to a degree that shocks

is. Every feature expresses cunning, employing itself in the maintaining of tyranny; and dissimulation, pretending itself an advocate for truth.

My letters have already apprised you of that close and intimate connexion that took place between the lady you visited in Queen Anne's-street and us. Nothing could be more promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication as if we had been born in the same house and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and, because writing does not agree with your mother, proposed a correspondence with me. By her own desire, I wrote to her under the assumed relation of brother, and she to me as my sister.

I thank you for the search you have made after my intended motto, but I no longer need it.

Our love is always with yourself and family.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

Lady Austen returned in the following summer to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the river Ouse, as it flows between Clifton and Olney. Her benevolent ingenuity was exerted to guard the spirits of Cowper from sinking again into that hypochondriacal dejection to which, even in her company, he still sometimes discovered an alarming tendency. To promote his occupation and amusement, she furnished him with a small portable printing-press,

and he gratefully sent her the following verses printed by himself, and enclosed in a billet that alludes to the occasion on which they were composed—a very unseasonable flood, that interrupted the communication between Clifton and Olney.

To watch the storms, and hear the sky
Give all our almanacks the lie;
To shake with cold, and see the plains
In autumn drown'd with wintry rains;
'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
And wish myself a Dutch mynheer;
I then should have no need of wit;
For lumpish Hollander unfit!
Nor should I then repine at mud,
Or meadows deluged with a flood;
But in a bog live well content,
And find it just my element;
Should be a clod, and not a man;
Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
With charitable aid to drag
My mind out of its proper quag;
Should have the genius of a boor,
And no ambition to have more.

My dear Sister—You see my beginning—I do not know but, in time, I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny ballads—excuse the coarseness of my paper—I wasted such a quantity before I could accomplish any thing legible that I could not afford finer. I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the town to make me a longer case: for you may observe that my lines turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to make the two halves exactly coincide with each other.

We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood. We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more till the waters shall subside. I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other. It is but an imaginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us as if the British channel rolled between us.

Yours, my dear sister, with Mrs. Unwin's best love,

W. C.

A flood that precluded him from the conversation of such an enlivening friend was to Cowper a serious evil; but he was happily relieved from the apprehension of such disappointment in future, by seeing the friend so pleasing and so useful to him very comfortably settled as his next-door neighbour. An event so agreeable to the poet was occasioned by circumstances of a painful nature, related in a letter to Mr. Unwin, which, though it bears no date of month or year, seems properly to claim insertion in this place.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear William—The modest terms in which you express yourself on the subject of Lady Austen's commendation embolden me to add my suffrage to hers, and to confirm it by assuring you that I think her just and well-founded in her opinion of you. The compliment indeed glances at myself; for, were

you less than she accounts you, I ought not to afford you that place in my esteem which you have held so long. My own sagacity, therefore, and discernment are not a little concerned upon the occasion, for either you resemble the picture, or I have strangely mistaken my man, and formed an erroneous judgment of his character. With respect to your face and figure, indeed, there I leave the ladies to determine, as being naturally best qualified to decide the point; but whether you are perfectly the man of sense and the gentleman, is a question in which I am as much interested as they, and which, you being my friend, I am of course prepared to settle in your favour. The lady (whom, when you know her as well, you will love as much as we do) is, and has been during the last fortnight, a part of our family. Before she was perfectly restored to health, she returned to Clifton. Soon after she came back, Mr. Jones had occasion to go to London. No sooner was he gone than the *château*, being left without a garrison, was besieged as regularly as the night came on. Villains were both heard and seen in the garden, and at the doors and windows. The kitchen window in particular was attempted, from which they took a complete pane of glass, exactly opposite to the iron by which it was fastened, but providentially the window had been nailed to the wood-work, in order to keep it close, and that the air might be excluded; thus they were disappointed, and, being discovered by the maid, withdrew. The ladies, being worn out with continual watching and repeated alarms, were

at last prevailed upon to take refuge with us. Men furnished with fire-arms were put into the house, and the rascals, having intelligence of this circumstance, beat a retreat. Mr. Jones returned; Mrs. Jones and Miss Green, her daughter, left us, but Lady Austen's spirits having been too much disturbed to be able to repose in a place where she had been so much terrified, she was left behind. She remains with us till her lodgings at the vicarage can be made ready for her reception. I have now sent you what has occurred of moment in our history since my last.

I say amen with all my heart to your observation on religious characters. Men who profess themselves adepts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy, or jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion alone a profession is often slightly taken up and slovenly carried on, because, forsooth, candour and charity require us to hope the best, and to judge favourably of our neighbour, and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority, upon this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done. Behold a Christian! a saint! a phœnix! In the mean time, perhaps, his heart and his temper, and even his conduct, are

unsanctified; possibly less exemplary than those of some avowed infidels. No matter—he can talk—he has the Shibboleth of the true church—the Bible in his pocket, and a head well stored with notions. But the quiet, humble, modest, and peaceable person, who is in his practice what the other is only in his profession, who hates a noise, and therefore makes none, who, knowing the snares that are in the world, keeps himself as much out of it as he can, and never enters it but when duty calls, and even then with fear and trembling—is the Christian, that will always stand highest in the estimation of those who bring all characters to the test of true wisdom, and judge of the tree by its fruit.

You are desirous of visiting the prisoners; you wish to administer to their necessities, and to give them instruction. This task you will undertake, though you expect to encounter many things in the performance of it that will give you pain. Now *this* I can understand—you will not listen to the sensibilities that distress yourself, but to the distresses of others. Therefore, when I meet with one of the specious praters above mentioned, I will send him to Stock, that by your diffidence he may be taught a lesson of modesty; by your generosity, a little feeling for others, and by your general conduct, in short, to chatter less and to do more.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 16. 1782.

Carraccioli says—" There is something very bewitching in authorship, and that he who has once written will write again." It may be so; I can subscribe to the former part of his assertion from my own experience, having never found an amusement, among the many I have been obliged to have recourse to, that so well answered the purpose for which I used it. The quieting and composing effect of it was such, and so totally absorbed have I sometimes been in my rhyming occupation, that neither the past nor the future (those themes which to me are so fruitful in regret at other times) had any longer a share in my contemplation. For this reason I wish, and have often wished, since the fit left me, that it would seize me again; but hitherto I have wished it in vain. I see no want of subjects, but I feel a total disability to discuss them. Whether it is thus with other writers or not I am ignorant, but I should suppose my case in this respect a little peculiar. The voluminous writers, at least, whose vein of fancy seems always to have been rich in proportion to their occasions, cannot have been so unlike and so unequal to themselves. There is this difference between my poetship and the generality of *them*—they have been ignorant how much they have stood indebted to an Almighty power for the exercise of those talents they have supposed their own. Whereas I know, and know most perfectly,

and am perhaps to be taught it to the last, that my power to think, whatever it be, and consequently my power to compose, is, as much as my outward form, afforded to me by the same hand that makes me in any respect to differ from a brute. This lesson, if not constantly inculcated, might perhaps be forgotten, or at least too slightly remembered.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Feb. 24, 1782.

My dear Friend—If I should receive a letter from you to-morrow, you must still remember, that I am not in your debt, having paid you by anticipation. Knowing that you take an interest in my publication, and that you have waited for it with some impatience, I write to inform you, that, if it is possible for a printer to be punctual, I shall come forth on the first of March. I have ordered two copies to Stock; one for Mr. John Unwin. It is possible, after all, that my book may come forth without a preface. Mr. Newton has written (he could indeed write no other) a very sensible, as well as a very friendly one; and it is printed. But the bookseller, who knows him well, and esteems him highly, is anxious to have it cancelled, and, with my consent first obtained, has offered to negociate that matter with the author. He judges, that, though it would serve to recommend the volume to the religious, it would disgust the profane, and that

there is in reality no need of a preface at all. I have found Johnson a very judicious man on other occasions, and am therefore willing that he should determine for me upon this.

There are but few persons to whom I present my book. The Lord Chancellor is one. I enclose in a packet I send by this post to Johnson a letter to his lordship, which will accompany the volume; and to you I enclose a copy of it, because I know you will have a friendly curiosity to see it. An author is an important character. Whatever his merits may be, the mere circumstance of authorship warrants his approach to persons whom otherwise perhaps he could hardly address without being deemed impertinent. He can do me no good. If I should happen to do him a little, I shall be a greater man than he. I have ordered a copy likewise to Mr. S.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LORD THURLOW.

(ENCLOSED TO MR. UNWIN.)

Olney, Bucks, Feb 25, 1782.

My Lord—I make no apology for what I account a duty. I should offend against the cordiality of our former friendship should I send a volume into the world, and forget how much I am bound to pay my particular respects to your lordship upon that occasion. When we parted, you little thought of

hearing from me again; and I as little that I should live to write to you, still less that I should wait on you in the capacity of an author.

Among the pieces I have the honour to send there is one for which I must intreat your pardon; I mean that of which your lordship is the subject. The best excuse I can make is, that it flowed almost spontaneously from the affectionate remembrance of a connexion that did me so much honour.

As to the rest, their merits, if they have any, and their defects, which are probably more than I am aware of, will neither of them escape your notice. But where there is much discernment, there is generally much candour; and I commit myself into your lordship's hands with the less anxiety, being well acquainted with yours.

If my first visit, after so long an interval, should prove neither a troublesome nor a dull one, but especially, if not altogether an unprofitable one, *omne tuli punctum.*

I have the honour to be, though with very different impressions of some subjects, yet with the same sentiments of affection and esteem as ever, your lordship's faithful and most obedient, humble servant,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 1782.

My dear Friend—I enclose Johnson's letter upon the subject of the Preface, and would send

you my reply to it, if I had kept a copy. This however was the purport of it, That Mr. ——, whom I described as you described him to me, had made a similar objection, but that, being willing to hope that two or three pages of sensible matter, well expressed, might possibly go down, though of a religious cast, I was resolved to believe him mistaken, and to pay no regard to it. That *his* judgment, however, who by his occupation is bound to understand what will promote the sale of a book, and what will hinder it, seemed to deserve more attention. That therefore, according to his own offer, written on a small slip of paper now lost, I should be obliged to him if he would state his difficulties to you; adding, I need not inform *him*, who is so well acquainted with you, that he would find you easy to be persuaded to sacrifice, if necessary, what you had written, to the interests of the book. I find he has had an interview with you upon the occasion, and your behaviour in it has verified my prediction. What course he determines upon, I do not know, nor am I at all anxious about it. It is impossible for me, however, to be so insensible of your kindness in writing the Preface, as not to be desirous of defying all contingencies, rather than entertain a wish to suppress it. It will do me honour in the eyes of those whose good opinion is indeed an honour; and if it hurts me in the estimation of others, I cannot help it; the fault is neither yours, nor mine, but theirs. If a minister's is a more splendid character than a poet's, and I think nobody that understands

their value can hesitate in deciding that question, then undoubtedly the advantage of having our names united in the same volume is all on my side.

We thank you for the Fast-sermon. I had not read two pages before I exclaimed—the man has read Expostulation. But though there is a strong resemblance between the two pieces, in point of matter, and sometimes the very same expressions are to be met with, yet I soon recollected that, on such a theme, a striking coincidence of both might happen without a wonder. I doubt not that it is the production of an honest man, it carries with it an air of sincerity and zeal that is not easily counterfeited. But, though I can see no reason why kings should not hear sometimes of their faults as well as other men, I think I see many good ones why they should not be reproved so publicly. It can hardly be done with that respect which is due to their office, on the part of the author, or without encouraging a spirit of unmannerly censure in his readers. His majesty too, perhaps, might answer —my own personal feelings, and offences I am ready to confess, but were I to follow your advice, and cashier the profligate from my service, where must I seek men of faith and true Christian piety, qualified by nature and by education to succeed them? Business must be done, men of business alone can do it, and good men are rarely found, under that description. When Nathan reproved David, he did not employ a herald, or accompany his charge with the sound of the trumpet; nor

can I think the writer of this sermon quite justifiable in exposing the king's faults in the sight of the people.

Your answer respecting Ætna is quite satisfactory, and gives me much pleasure. I hate altering, though I never refuse the task when propriety seems to enjoin it; and an alteration in this instance, if I am not mistaken, would have been singularly difficult. Indeed, when a piece has been finished two or three years, and an author finds occasion to amend or make an addition to it, it is not easy to fall upon the very vein from which he drew his ideas in the first instance, but either a different turn of thought or expression will betray the patch, and convince a reader of discernment that it has been cobbled and varnished.

Our love to you both, and to the young Euphrosyne; the old lady of that name being long since dead; if she pleases, she shall fill her vacant office, and be my muse hereafter.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 6, 1782.

Is peace the nearer because our patriots have resolved that it is desirable? Will the victory they have gained in the House of Commons be attended with any other? Do they expect the same success on other occasions, and, having once gained a majority, are they to be the majority for

ever?* These are the questions we agitate by the fire-side in an evening, without being able to come to any certain conclusion, partly, I suppose, because the subject is in itself uncertain, and partly because we are not furnished with the means of understanding it. I find the politics of times past far more intelligible than those of the present. Time has thrown light upon what was obscure, and decided what was ambiguous. The characters of great men, which are always mysterious while they live, are ascertained by the faithful historian, and sooner or later receive the wages of fame or infamy, according to their true deserts. How have I seen sensible and learned men burn incense to the memory of Oliver Cromwell, ascribing to him, as the greatest hero in the world, the dignity of the British empire, during the interregnum. A century passed before that idol, which seemed to be of gold, was proved to be a wooden one. The fallacy however was at length detected, and the honour of that detection has fallen to the share of a woman. I do not know whether you have read Mrs. Macaulay's history of that period. She has handled him more roughly than the Scots did at the battle of Dunbar. He would have thought it little worth his while to have broken through all obligations

* The nation was growing weary of the American war, especially since the surrender of Lord Cornwallis's army at York Town, and the previous capture of General Burgoyne's at Saratoga. The ministry at this time were frequently outvoted, and Lord North's administration was ultimately dissolved.

divine and human, to have wept crocodile's tears, and wrapt himself up in the obscurity of speeches that nobody could understand, could he have foreseen that, in the ensuing century, a lady's scissars would clip his laurels close, and expose his naked villany to the scorn of all posterity. This however has been accomplished, and so effectually, that I suppose it is not in the power of the most artificial management to make them grow again. Even the sagacious of mankind are blind, when Providence leaves them to be deluded; so blind, that a tyrant shall be mistaken for a true patriot: true patriots (such were the Long Parliament) shall be abhorred as tyrants, and almost a whole nation shall dream that they have the full enjoyment of liberty, for years after such a complete knave as Oliver shall have stolen it completely from them. I am indebted for all this show of historical knowledge to Mr. Bull, who has lent me five volumes of the work I mention. I was willing to display it while I have it; in a twelvemonth's time, I shall remember almost nothing of the matter.

W. C.

It has been the lot of Cromwell to be praised too little or too much. Of his political delinquencies, and gross hypocrisy, there can be only one opinion. But those who are conversant with that period well know how the genius of Mazarine, the minister of Louis XIII, was awed by the decision and boldness of Cromwell's character; that Spain and Holland experienced a signal humiliation, and that the vic-

tories of Admiral Blake at that crisis are among the most brilliant records of our naval fame. It was in allusion to these triumphs that Waller remarks, in his celebrated panegyric on the Lord Protector.

> "The seas our own, and now all nations greet,
> With bending sails each vessel of our fleet.
> Your power extends as far as winds can blow,
> Or swelling sails upon the globe may go." *

We add the following anecdote recorded of Waller, though it is probably familiar to many of our readers. On Charles's restoration, the poet presented that prince with a congratulatory copy of verses, when the king shortly afterwards observed, "You wrote better verses on Cromwell;" to which Waller replied, "Please your majesty, we poets always succeed better in fiction than in truth."

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, March 7, 1782.

My dear Friend—We have great pleasure in the contemplation of your northern journey, as it promises us a sight of you and yours by the way, and are only sorry Miss Shuttleworth cannot be of the party. A line to ascertain the hour when we may expect you, by the next preceding post, will be welcome.

It is not much for my advantage that the printer delays so long to gratify your expectation. It is a state of mind that is apt to tire and disconcert us;

* Waller's Panegyric to my Lord Protector, 1654.

and there are but few pleasures that make us amends for the pain o. repeated disappointment. I ake it for granted you have not received the volume, not having received it myself, nor indeed heard from Johnson, since he fixed the first of the nonth for its publication.

What a medley are our public prints! Half the page filled with the ruin of the country, and the other half filled with the vices and pleasures of it—here is an island taken, and there a new comedy—here an empire lost, and there an Italian opera, or a lord's rout on a Sunday!

"May it please your lordship! I am an Englishman, and must stand or fall with the nation. Religion, its true palladium, has been stolen away; and it is crumbling into dust. Sin ruins us, the sins of the great especially, and of their sins especially the violation of the sabbath, because it is naturally productive of all the rest. If you wish well to our arms, and would be glad to see the kingdom emerging from her ruins, pay more respect to an ordinance, that deserves the deepest! I do not say pardon this short remonstrance!——The concern I feel for my country, and the interest I have in its prosperity, give me a right to make it. I am, &c."

Thus one might write to his lordship, and (I suppose) might be as profitably employed in whistling the tune of an old ballad.

I have no copy of the Preface, nor do I know at present how Johnson and Mr. Newton have settled

it. In the matter of it there was nothing offensively peculiar. But it was thought too pious.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

It is impossible to read this passage without very painful emotions. How low must have been the state of religion at that period, when the introduction of a Preface to the Poems of Cowper, by the Rev. John Newton, was sufficient to endanger their popularity. We are at the same time expressly assured, that there was nothing in the Preface offensively peculiar; and that the only charge alleged against it was that of its being "too pious." What a melancholy picture does this single fact present of the state of religion in those days; and with what sentiments of gratitude ought we to hail the great moral revolution that has since occurred! Witness the assemblage of so many Christian charities, our Bible, Missionary, Jewish, and Tract Societies, which, to use the emphatic language of Burke, "like so many non-conductors, avert the impending wrath of Heaven!" Witness the increasing instances of rank ennobled by piety and consecrated to its advancement! Witness too the entrance of religion into our seats of learning, and into some of our public schools, thus presenting the delightful spectacle of classic taste and knowledge in alliance with heavenly wisdom. To these causes of pious gratitude we may add the revival of religion among our clergy, and generally among the

ministers of the sanctuary, till we are constrained to exclaim, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." * We trust that we are indulging in no vain expectation, when we express our firm persuasion, that the dawn of a brighter day is arrived; and though we see, both at home and on the continent of Europe, much over which piety may weep and tremble, while idolatry and superstition spread their thick veil of darkness over the largest portion of the globe, still, notwithstanding all these impediments and discouragements, we believe that the materials for the moral amelioration of mankind are all prepared; and that nothing but the fire of the Eternal Spirit is wanting, to kindle them into flame and splendour.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 14, 1782.

My dear Friend—I can only repeat what I said some time since, that the world is grown more foolish and careless, than it was when I had the honour of knowing it. Though your Preface was of a serious cast, it was yet free from every thing that might with propriety expose it to the charge of Methodism, being guilty of no offensive peculiarities, nor containing any of those obnoxious doctrines, at which the world is apt to be angry, and

* Isaiah lii. 7.

which we must give her leave to be angry at, because we know she cannot help it. It asserted nothing more than every rational creature must admit to be true—"that divine and earthly things can no longer stand in competition with each other, in the judgment of any man, than while he continues ignorant of their respective value; and that the moment the eyes are opened, the latter are always cheerfully relinquished for the sake of the former." Now I do most certainly remember the time when such a proposition as this would have been at least supportable, and when it would not have spoiled the market of any volume, to which it had been prefixed; ergo—the times are altered for the worse.

I have reason to be very much satisfied with my publisher—he marked such lines as did not please him, and, as often as I could, I paid all possible respect to his animadversions. You will accordingly find, at least if you recollect how they stood in the MS. that several passages are better for having undergone his critical notice. Indeed I do not know where I could have found a bookseller who could have pointed out to me my defects with more discernment; and as I find it is a fashion for modern bards to publish the names of the literati who have favoured their works with a revisal, would myself most willingly have acknowledged my obligations to Johnson, and so I told him. I am to thank you likewise, and ought to have done it in the first place, for having recommended to me the suppression of some lines, which I am now more

than ever convinced would at least have done me no honour

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, March 14, 1782.

My dear Friend—As servant-maids, and such sort of folks, account a letter good for nothing, unless it begins with—This comes hoping you are well, as I am at this present: so I should be chargeable with a great omission, were I not to make frequent use of the following grateful exordium—Many thanks for a fine cod and oysters.—Your bounty never arrived more seasonably. I had just been observing that, among other deplorable effects of the war, the scarcity of fish which it occasioned, was severely felt at Olney; but your plentiful supply immediately reconciled me, though not to the war, yet to my small share in the calamities it produces.

I hope my bookseller has paid due attention to the order I gave him to furnish you with my books. The composition of those pieces afforded me an agreeable amusement at intervals, for about a twelvemonth; and I should be glad to devote the leisure hours of another twelvemonth to the same occupation; at least, if my lucubrations should meet with a favourable acceptance. But I cannot write when I would; and whether I shall find readers is

* Private Correspondence.

a problem not yet decided. So the Muse and I are parted for the present.

I sent Lord Thurlow a volume, and the following letter with it, which I communicate because you will undoubtedly have some curiosity to see it.*

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, March 18, 1782.

My dear Friend—Nothing has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favourable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commendation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I should find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbours in this place, who say they like it, doubtless I had rather they should than that they should not, but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry than skill in the mathematics; their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner it had affected *you*. It was tickled, and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper that others, perhaps, of whose taste and judgment I had a high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel, I wish to please all; as an author, I am perfectly indiffer-

* This letter has been inserted in the preceding pages.

ent to the judgment of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance, however, in your letter which pleased me most was, that you wrote in high spirits, and, though you said much, suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy; my delicacy is obliged to you, but you observe it is not so squeamish but that, after it has feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable dessert in the contemplation of praise implied. I now feel as if I should be glad to begin another volume, but from the will to the power is a step too wide for me to take at present, and the season of the year brings with it so many avocations into the garden, where I am my own *fac-totum*, that I have little or no leisure for the quill. I should do myself much wrong, were I to omit mentioning the great complacency with which I read your narrative of Mrs. Unwin's smiles and tears; persons of much sensibility are always persons of taste, and a taste for poetry depends indeed upon that very article more than upon any other. If she had Aristotle by heart, I should not esteem her judgment so highly, were she defective in point of feeling, as I do and must esteem it, knowing her to have such feelings as Aristotle could not communicate, and as half the readers in the world are destitute of. This it is that makes me set so high a price upon your mother's opinion. She is a critic by nature and not by rule, and has a perception of what is good or bad in composition that I never knew deceive her, insomuch that when two sorts of expression have pleaded equally for the precedence in my

own esteem, and I have referred, as in such cases I always did, the decision of the point to her, I never knew her at a loss for a just one.

Whether I shall receive any answer from his Chancellorship* or not, is at present *in ambiguo*, and will probably continue in the same state of ambiguity much longer. He is so busy a man, and at this time, if the papers may be credited, so particularly busy, that I am forced to mortify myself with the thought, that both my book and my letter may be thrown into a corner, as too insignificant for a statesman's notice, and never found till his executor finds them. This affair, however, is neither at my *libitum* nor his. I have sent him the truth. He that put it into the heart of a certain eastern monarch to amuse himself, one sleepless night, with listening to the records of his kingdom, is able to give birth to such another occasion, and inspire his lordship with a curiosity to know what he has received from a friend he once loved and valued. If an answer comes, however, you shall not long be a stranger to the contents of it.

I have read your letter to their worships, and much approve of it. May it have the desired effect it ought! If not, still you have acted a humane and becoming part, and the poor aching toes and fingers of the prisoners will not appear in judgment against you. I have made a slight alteration in the last sentence, which perhaps you will not disapprove.

Yours ever,

W. C.

* Lord Thurlow.

The conclusion of the preceding letter alludes to an application made by Mr. Unwin to the magistrates, for some warmer clothing for the prisoners in Chelmsford gaol.

It is a gratifying reflection that the whole system of prison discipline has undergone an entire revision since the above period. This reformation first commenced under the great philanthropist Howard, who devoted his life to the prosecution of so benevolent an object, and finally fell a victim to his zeal. Subsequently, and in our own times, the system has been extended still further; and the names of a Gurney, a Buxton, a Hoare, and others, will long be remembered with gratitude, as the friends and benefactors of these outcasts of society. One more effort was still wanting to complete this humane enterprize, viz., to endeavour to eradicate the habits of vice, and to implant the seeds of virtue. This attempt has been made by Mrs. Fry and her excellent female associates in the prison of Newgate; and the result, in some instances, has proved that no one, however depraved, is beyond the reach of mercy; and that divine truth, conveyed with zeal, and in the accents of Christian love and kindness, seldom fails to penetrate into the heart and conscience.

The unwillingness with which the mind receives the consolations of religion, when labouring under an illusion, is painfully evinced in the following letter.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, March 24, 1782.

My dear Friend—I was not unacquainted with Mr. B—'s extraordinary case, before you favoured me with his letter and his intended dedication to the Queen, though I am obliged to you for a sight of those two curiosities, which I do not recollect to have ever seen till you sent them. I could, however, were it not a subject that would make us all melancholy, point out to you some essential differences between his state of mind and my own, which would prove mine to be by far the most deplorable of the two. I suppose no man would despair, if he did not apprehend something singular in the circumstances of his own story, something that discriminates it from that of every other man, and that induces despair as an inevitable consequence. You may encounter his unhappy persuasion with as many instances as you please of persons who, like him, having renounced all hope, were yet restored; and may thence infer that he, like them, shall meet with a season of restoration—but it is in vain. Every such individual accounts himself an exception to all rules, and therefore the blessed reverse that others have experienced affords no ground of comfortable expectation to *him*. But, you will say, it is reasonable to conclude that as all your predecessors in this vale of misery and horror have found themselves delightfully disappointed at last, so will you:—I grant the reasonableness of it; it would be sinful,

* Private Correspondence.

perhaps, because uncharitable, to reason otherwise; but an argument, hypothetical in its nature, however rationally conducted, may lead to a false conclusion; and, in this instance, so will yours. But I forbear. For the cause above mentioned, I will say no more, though it is a subject on which I could write more than the mail would carry. I must deal with you as I deal with poor Mrs. Unwin, in all our disputes about it, cutting all controversy short by an appeal to the event.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, April 1, 1782.

My dear Friend—I could not have found a better trumpeter. Your zeal to serve the interest of my volume, together with your extensive acquaintance, qualify you perfectly for that most useful office. Methinks I see you with the long tube at your mouth, proclaiming to your numerous connexions my poetical merits, and at proper intervals levelling it at Olney, and pouring into my ear the welcome sound of their approbation. I need not encourage you to proceed, your breath will never fail in such a cause; and, thus encouraged, I myself perhaps may proceed also, and, when the versifying fit returns, produce another volume. Alas! we shall never receive such commendations from him on the woolsack as your good friend has lavished upon us. Whence I learn that, however important I may be in my own eyes, I am very insignificant in his. To

make me amends, however, for this mortification, Mr. Newton tells me that my book is likely to run, spread, and prosper; that the grave cannot help smiling, and the gay are struck with the truth of it; and that it is likely to find its way into his Majesty's hands, being put into a proper course for that purpose. Now, if the King should fall in love with my muse, and with you for her sake, such an event would make us ample amends for the Chancellor's indifference, and you might be the first divine that ever reached a mitre, from the shoulders of a poet. But (I believe) we must be content, I with my gains, if I gain any thing, and you with the pleasure of knowing that I am a gainer.

We laughed heartily at your answer to little John's question; and yet I think you might have given him a direct answer——"There are various sorts of cleverness, my dear——I do not know that mine lies in the poetical way, but I can do ten times more towards the entertainment of company in the way of conversation than our friend at Olney. He can rhyme, and I can rattle. If he had my talent, or I had his, we should be too charming, and the world would almost adore us."

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, April 27, 1782.

My dear William—A part of Lord Harrington's new-raised corps have taken up their quarters at

Olney, since you left us. They have the regimental music with them. The men have been drawn up this morning upon the Market-hill, and a concert, such as we have not heard these many years, has been performed at no great distance from our window. Your mother and I both thrust our heads into the coldest east wind that ever blew in April, that we might hear them to greater advantage. The band acquitted themselves with taste and propriety, not *blairing*, like trumpeters at a fair, but producing gentle and elegant symphony, such as charmed our ears, and convinced us that no length of time can wear out a taste for harmony, and that though plays, balls, and masquerades, have lost all their power to please us, and we should find them not only insipid but insupportable, yet sweet music is sure to find a corresponding faculty in the soul, a sensibility that lives to the last, which even religion itself does not extinguish.

When we objected to your coming for a single night, it was only in the way of argument, and in hopes to prevail on you to contrive a longer abode with us. But rather than not see you at all, we should be glad of you though but for an hour. If the paths should be clean enough, and we are able to walk, (for you know we cannot ride,) we will endeavour to meet you in Weston-park. But I mention no particular hour, that I may not lay you under a supposed obligation to be punctual, which might be difficult at the end of so long a journey. Only, if the weather be favourable, you shall find us there in the evening. It is winter in the south,

perhaps therefore it may be spring at least, if not summer, in the north; for I have read that it is warmest in Greenland when it is coldest here. Be that as it may, we may hope at the latter end of such an April, that the first change of wind will improve the season.

The curate's simile latinized—

> Sors adversa gerit stimulum, sed tendit et alas:
> Pungit api similis, sed velut ista fugit.

What a dignity there is in the Roman language; and what an idea it gives us of the good sense and masculine mind of the people that spoke it! The same thought which, clothed in English, seems childish and even foolish, assumes a different air in Latin, and makes at least as good an epigram as some of Martial's.

I remember your making an observation, when here, on the subject of "parentheses," to which I acceded without limitation; but a little attention will convince us both that they are not to be universally condemned. When they abound, and when they are long, they both embarrass the sense, and are a proof that the writer's head is cloudy; that he has not properly arranged his matter, or is not well skilled in the graces of expression. But, as parenthesis is ranked by grammarians among the figures of rhetoric, we may suppose they had a reason for conferring that honour upon it. Accordingly we shall find that, in the use of some of our finest writers, as well as in the hands of the ancient poets and orators,

has a peculiar elegance, and imparts a beauty ich the period would want without it.

> "Hoc nemus, hunc, inquit, frondoso vertice collem
> (Quis deus incertum est) habitat deus."
>
> VIRG. Æn. 8.

this instance, the first that occurred, it is graceful. ave not time to seek for more, nor room to insert :m. But your own observation, I believe, will ıfirm my opinion.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, May 27, 1782.

My dear Friend—Rather ashamed of having been all dejected by the censure of the Critical Re- :wers, who certainly could not read without pre- lice a book replete with opinions and doctrines which they cannot subscribe, I have at present little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my ıity, lest it should be too much flattered by the lowing eulogium. I send it to you for the reasons ave, when I imparted to you some other anec- tes of a similar kind, while we were together. ır interests in the success of this same volume are closely united, that you *must* share with me in ɜ praise or blame that attends it; and, sympa- zing with me under the burthen of injurious ıatment, have a right to enjoy with me the cor-

dials I now and then receive, as I happen to meet with more favourable and candid judges.

A merchant, a friend of ours,* (you will soon guess him,) sent my Poems to one of the first philosophers, one of the most eminent literary characters, as well as one of the most important in the political world, that the present age can boast of. Now perhaps your conjecturing faculties are puzzled, and you begin to ask "who, where, and what is he? speak out, for I am all impatience." I will not say a word more: the letter in which he returned his thanks for the present shall speak for him.†

We may now treat the critics as the archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons. His grace gave him a kick, and said, "Begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it."

We are glad that you are safe at home again. Could we see at one glance of the eye what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should indeed find reason enough to be thankful for journeys performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers we are not perhaps even permitted to see. When, in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close

* John Thornton, Esq.

† Here Cowper transcribed the letter written from Passy, by the American ambassador, Franklin, in praise of his book.

by his side, and which but for the lightning he must have run foul of, both the danger and the transient light that shewed it were undoubtedly designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils of which he had notice, but from many more of which he had no information, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingencies may nevertheless take place! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that, steering contrary courses from parts of the world so immensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea, where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another! Yet this must have happened but for the remarkable interference which he has recorded. The same Providence indeed might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other that they should never have met at all, but then this lesson would have been lost; at least, the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe, without having had occasion to relate an incident that so naturally suggests it.

I am no more delighted with the season than you are. The absence of the sun, which has graced the spring with much less of his presence than he vouchsafed to the winter, has a very uncomfortable effect upon my frame; I feel an invincible aversion to employment, which I am yet constrained to fly to as my only remedy against something worse. If I do

nothing I am dejected, if I do any thing I am weary, and that weariness is best described by the word lassitude, which of all weariness in the world is the most oppressive. But enough of myself and the weather.

The blow we have struck in the West Indies* will, I suppose, be decisive, at least for the present year, and so far as that part of our possessions is concerned in the present conflict. But the news-writers and their correspondents disgust me and make me sick. One victory, after such a long series of adverse occurrences, has filled them with self-conceit and impertinent boasting; and, while Rodney is almost accounted a Methodist for ascribing his success to Providence,† men who have renounced all dependence upon such a friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the French out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry

* This alludes to the celebrated victory gained by Sir George Rodney over Count de Grasse, April 12, 1782. On this occasion, eight sail of the line were captured from the French, three foundered at sea, two were for ever disabled, and the French Admiral was taken in the Ville de Paris, which had been a present from the city of Paris to Louis XV. Lord Robert Manners fell in this engagement. It was the first instance where the attempt was ever made of breaking the line, a system adopted afterwards with great success by Lord Nelson.

† Lord Rodney's dispatches commenced in the following words: "It has pleased God, out of his Divine Providence, to grant to his Majesty's arms,"&c. This was more religious than the nation at that time could tolerate. Lord Nelson afterwards was the first British Admiral that adopted the same language.

the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it; but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key; and no doubt, wherever our papers go, shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true glory should be, to do his business well and say little about it; but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess, as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, June 12, 1782.

My dear Friend—Every extraordinary occurrence in our lives affords us an opportunity to learn, if we will, something more of our own hearts and tempers than we were before aware of. It is easy to promise ourselves beforehand that our conduct shall be wise, or moderate, or resolute, on any given occasion. But, when that occasion occurs, we do not always find it easy to make good the promise: such a difference there is between theory and practice. Perhaps this is no new remark; but it is not a whit the worse for being old, if it be true.

Before I had published, I said to myself—you and I, Mr. Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics may say of our book. But, having once sent my wits for a venture, I soon became anxious about the issue, and found that I

could not be satisfied with a warm place in my own good graces, unless my friends were pleased with me as much as I pleased myself. Meeting with their approbation, I began to feel the workings of ambition. It is well, said I, that my friends are pleased; but friends are sometimes partial, and mine, I have reason to think, are not altogether free from bias. Methinks I should like to hear a stranger or two speak well of me. I was presently gratified by the approbation of the "London Magazine" and the "Gentleman's," particularly by that of the former, and by the plaudit of Dr. Franklin. By the way, magazines are publications we have but little respect for, till we ourselves are chronicled in them, and then they assume an importance in our esteem which before we could not allow them. But the "Monthly Review," the most formidable of all my judges, is still behind. What will that critical Rhadamanthus say, when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award. Alas! when I wish for a favourable sentence from that quarter, (to confess a weakness that I should not confess to all,) I feel myself not a little influenced by a tender regard to my reputation here, even among my neighbours at Olney. Here are watchmakers, who themselves are wits, and who at present perhaps think me one. Here is a carpenter, and a baker, and not to mention others, here is your idol, Mr. ——, whose smile is fame. All these read the "Monthly Review," and all these will set me down for a dunce, if those terrible cri-

ics should show them the example. But oh! wherver else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let ıe pass for a genius at Olney.

We are sorry for little William's illness. It is, owever, the privilege of infancy to recover almost nmediately what it has lost by sickness. We are orry too for Mr. ——'s dangerous condition. But ıe that is well prepared for the great journey canıot enter on it too soon for himself, though his riends will weep at his departure.

Yours,

W. C.

The immediate success of his first volume was very far from being equal to its extraordinary merit. For some time it seemed to be neglected by the public, although the first poem in the collection contains such a powerful image of its author as might be thought sufficient not only to excite attention but to secure attachment: for Cowper had undesignedly executed a masterly portrait of himself in describing the true poet: we allude to the following verses in "Table Talk."

Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads thro' the dewy meads:
She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes;
And charms the woodland scenes, and wilds unknown,
With artless airs and concerts of her own;
But seldom (as if fearful of expence)
Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—

Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought;
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dipt in heaven, that never die;
A soul exalted above earth, a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind;
And, as the sun in rising beauty drest
Looks from the dappled orient to the west,
And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close—
An eye like his to catch the distant goal,
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,
Like his to shed illuminating rays
On every scene and subject it surveys:
Thus grac'd, the man asserts a poet's name,
And the world cheerfully admits the claim.

The concluding lines may be considered as an omen of that celebrity which such a writer, in the process of time, could not fail to obtain. How just a subject of surprise and admiration is it, to behold an author starting under such a load of disadvantages, and displaying on the sudden such a variety of excellence! For, neglected as it was for a few years, the first volume of Cowper exhibits such a diversity of poetical powers as have very rarely indeed been given to any individual of the modern, or of the ancient world. He is not only great in passages of pathos and sublimity, but he is equally admirable in wit and humour. After descanting most copiously on sacred subjects, with the animation of a prophet and the simplicity of an apostle, he paints the ludicrous characters of common life with the comic force of a Molière, particularly in his poem on Conversation, and his exquisite portrait of a fretful

per; a piece of moral painting so highly finished so happily calculated to promote good-humour, t a transcript of the verses cannot but interest reader.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch;
You always do too little or too much:
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain;
Your elevated voice goes through the brain;
You fall at once into a lower key;
That's worse:—the drone-pipe of an humble-bee!
The southern sash admits too strong a light;
You rise and drop the curtain:—now it's night.
He shakes with cold;—you stir the fire and strive
To make a blaze:—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with ven'son, and he chooses fish;
With sole, that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first profess'd to loath;
And in due time feeds heartily on both:
Yet, still o'erclouded with a constant frown,
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself should work that wonder, if he can.
Alas! his efforts double his distress;
He likes your's little and his own still less.
Thus, always teazing others, always teaz'd,
His only pleasure is—to be displeas'd.

Part the Second.

Mr. Bull has already been mentioned in the preceding volume as the person who suggested to Cowper the translation of Madame Guion's Hymns. Cowper used to say of him, that he was the master of a fine imagination, or, rather, that he was not master of it.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Olney, June 22, 1782.

My dear Friend,

If reading verse be your delight,
'Tis mine as much, or more, to write;
But what we would, so weak is man,
Lies oft remote from what we can.
For instance, at this very time,
I feel a wish, by cheerful rhyme,
To soothe my friend, and, had I power,
To cheat him of an anxious hour;
Not meaning (for I must confess,
It were but folly to suppress,)
His pleasure or his good alone,
But squinting partly at my own.
But though the sun is flaming high
I' th' centre of yon arch, the sky,
And he had once (and who but he?)
The name for setting genius free,
Yet whether poets of past days
Yielded him undeserved praise,

* Private Correspondence.

And he by no uncommon lot
Was famed for virtues he had not;
Or whether, which is like enough,
His Highness may have taken huff,
So seldom sought with invocation,
Since it has been the reigning fashion
To disregard his inspiration,
I seem no brighter in my wits,
For all the radiance he emits,
Than if I saw through midnight vapour
The glimm'ring of a farthing taper.
O for a succedaneum, then,
T' accelerate a creeping pen,
O for a ready succedaneum,
Quod caput, cerebrum, et cranium
Pondere liberet exoso,
Et morbo jam caliginoso!
'Tis here; this oval box well fill'd
With best tobacco, finely mill'd,
Beats all Anticyra's pretences
To disengage the encumber'd senses

O Nymph of Transatlantic fame,
Where'er thine haunt, whate'er thy name,
Whether reposing on the side
Of Oroonoquo's spacious tide,
Or list'ning with delight not small
To Niagara's distant fall,
'Tis thine to cherish and to feed
The pungent nose-refreshing weed,
Which, whether pulverized it gain
A speedy passage to the brain,
Or whether, touch'd with fire, it rise
In circling eddies to the skies,
Does thought more quicken and refine
Than all the breath of all the Nine—
Forgive the Bard, if Bard he be,
Who once too wantonly made free

To touch with a satiric wipe
That symbol of thy power, the pipe;
So may no blight infest thy plains,
And no unseasonable rains,
And so may smiling Peace once more
Visit America's sad shore;
And thou, secure from all alarms
Of thund'ring drums and glitt'ring arms,
Rove unconfined beneath the shade
Thy wide-expanded leaves have made;
So may thy votaries increase,
And fumigation never cease.
May Newton, with renew'd delights,
Perform thine odorif'rous rites,
While clouds of incense half divine
Involve thy disappearing shrine;
And so may smoke-inhaling Bull
Be always filling, never full.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 16, 1782.

My dear Friend—Though some people pretend to be clever in the way of prophetical forecast, and to have a peculiar talent of sagacity, by which they can divine the meaning of a providential dispensation while its consequences are yet in embryo, I do not. There is at this time to be found, I suppose, in the cabinet, and in both houses, a greater assemblage of able men, both as speakers and counsellors, than ever were cotemporary in the same land. A man not accustomed to trace the workings of Providence, as recorded in Scripture, and that has given no attention to this particular

ubject, while employed in the study of profane istory, would assert boldly, that it is a token for ood, that much may be expected from them, and hat the country, though heavily afflicted, is not yet o be despaired of, distinguished as she is by so nany characters of the highest class. Thus he would say, and I do not deny that the event might ustify his skill in prognostics. God works by means; and, in a case of great national perplexity and distress, wisdom and political ability seem to be the only natural means of deliverance. But a mind more religiously inclined, and perhaps a little tinctured with melancholy, might with equal probability of success hazard a conjecture directly opposite. Alas! what is the wisdom of man, especially when he trusts in it as the only god of his confidence? When I consider the general contempt that is poured upon all things sacred, the profusion, the dissipation, the knavish cunning, of some, the rapacity of others, and the impenitence of all, I am rather inclined to fear that God, who honours himself by bringing human glory to shame, and by disappointing the expectations of those whose trust is in creatures, has signalized the present day as a day of much human sufficiency and strength, has brought together from all quarters of the land the most illustrious men to be found in it, only that he may prove the vanity of idols, and that, when a great empire is falling, and he has pronounced a sentence of ruin against it, the inhabitants, be they weak or strong, wise or foolish, must fall with it. I am rather confirmed in this persuasion by observing

that these luminaries of the state had no sooner fixed themselves in the political heaven, than the fall of the brightest of them shook all the rest. The arch of their power was no sooner struck than the key-stone slipped out of its place, those that were closest in connexion with it followed, and the whole building, new as it is, seems to be already a ruin. If a man should hold this language, who could convict him of absurdity? The Marquis of Rockingham is minister—all the world rejoices, anticipating success in war and a glorious peace. The Marquis of Rockingham is dead—all the world is afflicted, and relapses into its former despondence. What does this prove, but that the Marquis was their Almighty, and that, now he is gone, they know no other? But let us wait a little, they will find another. Perhaps the Duke of Portland, or perhaps the unpopular ——, whom they now represent as a devil, may obtain that honour. Thus God is forgot, and, when he is, his judgments are generally his remembrancers.

How shall I comfort you upon the subject of your present distress? Pardon me that I find myself obliged to smile at it, because who but yourself would be distressed upon such an occasion? You have behaved politely, and, like a gentleman, you have hospitably offered your house to a stranger, who could not, in your neighbourhood at least, have been comfortably accommodated any where else. He, by neither refusing nor accepting an offer that did him too much honour, has disgraced himself, but not you. I think for the future

you must be more cautious of laying yourself open to a stranger, and never again expose yourself to incivilities from an archdeacon you are not acquainted with.

Though I did not mention it, I felt with you what you suffered by the loss of Miss ——; I was only silent because I could minister no consolation to you on such a subject, but what I knew your mind to be already stored with. Indeed, the application of comfort in such cases, is a nice business, and perhaps when best managed might as well be let alone. I remember reading many years ago a long treatise on the subject of consolation, written in French, the author's name I forgot, but I wrote these words in the margin. Special consolation! at least for a Frenchman, who is a creature the most easily comforted of any in the world!

We are as happy in Lady Austen, and she in us, as ever—having a lively imagination, and being passionately desirous of consolidating all into one family (for she has taken her leave of London) she has just sprung a project which serves at least to amuse us and to make us laugh; it is to hire Mr. Small's house, on the top of Clifton-hill, which is large, commodious, and handsome, will hold us conveniently, and any friends who may occasionally favour us with a visit; the house is furnished, but, if it can be hired without the furniture will let for a trifle—your sentiments if you please upon this *démarche!*

I send you my last frank—our best love attends you individually and all together. I give you joy

of a happy change in the season, and myself also. I have filled four sides in less time than two would have cost me a week ago; such is the effect of sunshine upon such a butterfly as I am.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Aug. 3, 1782.

My dear Friend—Entertaining some hope that Mr. Newton's next letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your inquiry on the subject of Dr. Johnson's opinion, I have till now delayed my answer to your last; but the information is not yet come, Mr. Newton having intermitted a week more than usual, since his last writing. When I receive it, favourable or not, it shall be communicated to you; but I am not over-sanguine in my expectations from that quarter. Very learned and very critical heads are hard to please. He may perhaps treat me with lenity for the sake of the subject and design, but the composition, I think, will hardly escape his censure. But, though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry, except the "Night Thoughts," which, on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was however prevailed upon, and read me several times

over, so that, if my volume had sailed with him instead of Dr. Young's, I perhaps might have occupied that shelf in his memory which he then allotted to the Doctor.

It is a sort of paradox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience: passing from the green-house to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention on something which lay on the threshold of a door nailed up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—a viper! the largest that I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforesaid hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and, returning in a few seconds, missed him: he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still however the kitten sat watching immoveably on the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore foot, with her claws however sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophic in-

quiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which, though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the out-houses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Our proposed removal to Mr. Small's was, as you may suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects which people of lively imaginations play with and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has therefore no longer any connexion with the great city, and no house but at Olney. Her abode is to be at the vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture, and which she will occupy as soon as the

ıinister's wife has produced another child, which is xpected to make its entry in October.

Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a earned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of urs, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited ıst week, put into my hands three volumes of 'rench poetry, composed by Madame Guion—a ıuietist, say you, and a fanatic, I will have nothing o do with her.—'Tis very well, you are welcome o have nothing to do with her, but, in the mean ime, her verse is the only French verse I ever read hat I found agreeable; there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud, with so much eason, in the compositions of Prior. I have transated several of them, and shall proceed in my ranslations till I have filled a Lilliputian paperook I happen to have by me, which, when filled, I hall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer; rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and, were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

Yours,

W. C.

To this letter we annex a very lively *lusus poeticus* from the pen of Cowper, on the subject mentioned in the former part of the preceding letter.

THE COLUBRIAD.

Close by the threshold of a door nail'd fast
Three kittens sat; each kitten look'd aghast.
I, passing swift and inattentive by,
At the three kittens cast a careless eye;
Not much concern'd to know what they did there,
Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.
But presently a loud and furious hiss
Caus'd me to stop, and to exclaim "What's this?"
When, lo! upon the threshold met my view,
With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
A viper, long as Count de Grasse's queue.
Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,
Darting it full against a kitten's nose;
Who, having never seen, in field or house,
The like, sat still and silent as a mouse:
Only projecting, with attention due,
Her whisker'd face, she ask'd him, "Who are you?"
On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,
But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe:
With which well arm'd I hasten'd to the spot,
To find the viper, but I found him not.
And, turning up the leaves and shrubs around,
Found only—that he was not to be found.
But still, the kittens sitting as before,
Sat watching close the bottom of the door.
"I hope," said I, "the villain I would kill
Has slipt between the door and the door's sill;
And, if I make despatch and follow hard,
No doubt but I shall find him in the yard:"
For long ere now it should have been rehears'd,
'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
Ev'n there I found him, there the full-grown cat
His head with velvet paw did gently pat:
As curious as the kittens erst had been
To learn what this phenomenon might mean.

Fill'd with heroic ardour at the sight,
And fearing every moment he would bite,
And rob our household of our only cat
That was of age to combat with a rat;
With outstretch'd hoe I slew him at the door,
And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

Lady Austen became a tenant of the parsonage at Olney. When Mr. Newton occupied that parsonage, he had opened a door in the garden-wall, which admitted him in the most commodious manner to visit the sequestered poet, who resided in the next house. Lady Austen had the advantage of this easy intercourse, and so captivating was her society, both to Cowper and to Mrs. Unwin, that these intimate neighbours might be almost said to make one family, as it became their custom to dine always together, alternately in the houses of the two ladies.

The musical talents of Lady Austen induced Cowper to write a few songs of peculiar sweetness and pathos, to suit particular airs that she was accustomed to play on the harpsichord. We insert three of these, as proofs that, even in his hours of social amusement, the poet loved to dwell on ideas of tender devotion and pathetic solemnity.

SONG WRITTEN IN THE SUMMER OF 1783, AT THE REQUEST OF LADY AUSTEN.

AIR—"*My fond shepherds of late*," &c.

No longer I follow a sound;
  No longer a dream I pursue:
O happiness! not to be found,
  Unattainable treasure, adieu!

I have sought thee in splendour and dress,
  In the regions of pleasure and taste;
I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,
  But have proved thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope
  The voice of true wisdom inspires!
'Tis sufficient, if peace be the scope,
  And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind
  That seeks it in meekness and love;
But rapture and bliss are confined
  To the glorified spirits above!

SONG.

AIR—"*The lass of Pattie's mill.*"

When all within is peace,
  How Nature seems to smile!
Delights that never cease,
  The live-long day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
  With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings to deceive
  And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart
  Gives Nature power to please;
The mind that feels no smart
  Enlivens all it sees;
Can make a wintry sky
  Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
  As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,
  So beauteously array'd
In Nature's various robe,
  With wond'rous skill display'd,

Is to a mourner's heart
  A dreary wild at best;
It flutters to depart,
  And longs to be at rest.

following song, adapted to the march in obtained too great a celebrity not to merit n in this place. It relates to the loss of the George, the flag-ship of Admiral Kempen- ich went down with nine hundred persons d, (among whom was Rear-Admiral Kem-) at Spithead, August 29, 1782. The song favourite production of the poet's; so much t he amused himself by translating it into erse. We take the version from one of his ent letters, for the sake of annexing it to inal.

SONG, ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

Toll for the brave!
  The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
  Fast by their native shore!

Eight hundred of the brave,
  Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
  And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,
  And she was overset;
Down went the Royal George,
  With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!
  Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
  His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle;
  No tempest gave the shock;
She sprang no fatal leak;
  She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath;
  His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
  With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
  Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup
  The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
  And she may float again,
Full-charged with England's thunder,
  And plough the distant main.*

But Kempenfelt is gone,
  His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
  Shall plough the wave no more.

IN SUBMERSIONEM NAVIGII, CUI GEORGIUS, REGALE NOMEN, INDITUM.

Plangimus fortes. Periere fortes,
Patrium propter periere littus
Bis quatèr centum; subitò sub alto
  Æquore mersi.

* Attempts have recently been made to recover this vessel; and some of the guns have been raised, and found to be in excellent order.

Navis, innitens lateri, jacebat,
Malus ad summas trepidabat undas,
Cùm levis, funes quatiens, ad imum
Depulit aura.

Plangimus fortes. Nimis, heu, caducam
Fortibus vitam voluere parcæ,
Nec sinunt ultrà tibi nos recentes
Nectere laurus.

Magne, qui nomen, licèt incanorum,
Traditum ex multis atavis tulisti!
At tuos olim memorabit ævum
Omne triumphos.

Non hyems illos furibunda mersit,
Non mari in clauso scopuli latentes,
Fissa non rimis abies, nec atrox
Abstulit ensis.

Navitæ sed tum nimium jocosi
Voce fallebant hilari laborem,
Et quiescebat, calamoque dextram im-
pleverat heros.

Vos, quibus cordi est grave opus piumque,
Humidum ex alto spolium levate,
Et putrescentes sub aquis amicos
Reddite amicis!

Hi quidem (sic dîis placuit) fuere:
Sed ratis, nondùm putris, ire possit
Rursùs in bellum, Britonumque nomen
Tollere ad astra.

et the reader, who wishes to impress on his
l a just idea of the variety and extent of Cow-
poetical powers, contrast this heroic ballad of
iisite pathos with his diverting history of John
in!

That admirable and highly popular piece of pleasantry was composed at the period of which we are now speaking. An elegant and judicious writer, who has favoured the public with three interesting volumes relating to the early poets of our country, conjectures, that a poem, written by the celebrated Sir Thomas Moore in his youth, (the merry jest of the Serjeant and Frere) may have suggested to Cowper his tale of John Gilpin; but this singularly amusing ballad had a different origin; and it is a very remarkable fact, that, full of gaiety and humour as this favourite of the public has abundantly proved itself to be, it was really composed at a time when the spirit of the poet was very deeply tinged with his depressive malady.* It happened one afternoon, in those years when his accomplished friend, Lady Austen, made a part of his little evening circle, that she observed him sinking into increasing dejection. It was her custom, on these occasions, to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She told him the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter, brought on by his recollec-

* That an author should be able to write one of the most humorous ballads in the English language under such circumstances is an anomaly in human nature; but it serves to shew the goodness of Him, who knows how to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.

tion of her story, had kept him waking during the greatest part of the night, and that he had turned it into a ballad.—So arose the pleasant poem of John Gilpin. It was eagerly copied, and, finding its way rapidly to the newspapers, it was seized by the lively spirit of Henderson the comedian, a man, like the Yorick described by Shakspeare, "of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy," it was seized by Henderson as a proper subject for the display of his own comic powers, and, by reciting it in his public readings, he gave uncommon celebrity to the ballad, before the public suspected to what poet they were indebted for the sudden burst of ludicrous amusement. Many readers were astonished when the poem made its first authentic appearance in the second volume of Cowper.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Sept. 6, 1782.

My dear Friend—Yesterday, and not before, I received your letter, dated the 11th of June, from the hands of Mr. Small. I should have been happy to have known him sooner; but, whether being afraid of that horned monster, a Methodist, or whether from a principle of delicacy, or deterred by a flood, which has rolled for some weeks between Clifton and Olney, I know not,—he has favoured me only with a taste of his company, and will leave me on Saturday evening, to regret that our ac-

* Private Correspondence.

quaintance, so lately begun, must be so soon suspended. He will dine with us that day, which I reckon a fortunate circumstance, as I shall have an opportunity to introduce him to the liveliest and most entertaining woman in the country. I have seen him but for half an hour, yet, without boasting of much discernment, I see that he is polite, easy, cheerful, and sensible. An old man thus qualified, cannot fail to charm the lady in question. As to his religion, I leave it—I am neither his bishop nor his confessor. A man of his character, and recommended by you, would be welcome here, were he a Gentoo or a Mahometan.

I learn from him that certain friends of mine, whom I have been afraid to inquire about by letter, are alive and well. The current of twenty years has swept away so many whom I once knew, that I doubted whether it might be advisable to send my love to your mother and your sisters. They may have thought my silence strange, but they have here the reason of it. Assure them of my affectionate remembrance, and that nothing would make me happier than to receive you all in my greenhouse, your own Mrs. Hill included. It is fronted with myrtles, and lined with mats, and would just hold us, for Mr. Small informs me *your* dimensions are much the same as usual.

Yours, my dear Friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 4, 1782.

My dear Friend—You are too modest; though your last consisted of three sides only, I am certainly a letter in your debt. It is possible that this present writing may prove as short. Yet, short as it may be, it will be a letter, and make me creditor, and you my debtor. A letter, indeed, ought not to be estimated by the length of it, but by the contents, and how can the contents of any letter be more agreeable than your last.

You tell me that John Gilpin made you laugh tears, and that the ladies at court are delighted with my poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and they will be much happier than he! I know there is in the book that wisdom which cometh from above, because it was from above that I received it. May they receive it too! For, whether they drink it out of the cistern, or whether it falls upon them immediately from the clouds, as it did on me, it is all one. It is the water of life, which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more. As to the famous horseman above-mentioned, he and his feats are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them. You are perfectly at liberty to deal with them as you please. *Auctore tantùm anonymo imprimantur;* and when printed send me a copy.

I congratulate you on the discharge of your duty and your conscience, by the pains you have taken for the relief of the prisoners. You proceeded wisely, yet courageously, and deserved better success. Your labours, however, will be remembered elsewhere, when you shall be forgotten here; and, if the poor folks at Chelmsford should never receive the benefit of them, you will yourself receive it in heaven. It is pity that men of fortune should be determined to acts of beneficence, sometimes by popular whim or prejudice, and sometimes by motives still more unworthy. The liberal subscription, raised in behalf of the widows of seamen lost in the Royal George, was an instance of the former. At least a plain, short, and sensible letter in the newspaper, convinced me at the time that it was an unnecessary and injudicious collection: and the difficulty you found in effectuating your benevolent intentions on this occasion, constrains me to think that, had it been an affair of more notoriety than merely to furnish a few poor fellows with a little fuel to preserve their extremities from the frost, you would have succeeded better. Men really pious delight in doing good by stealth. But nothing less than an ostentatious display of bounty will satisfy mankind in general. I feel myself disposed to furnish you with an opportunity to shine in secret. We do what we can. But that *can* is little. You have rich friends, are eloquent on all occasions, and know how to be pathetic on a proper one. The winter will be severely felt at Olney by many, whose sobriety, industry, and honesty, re-

commend them to charitable notice: and we think we could tell such persons as Mr. ——, or Mr. ——, half a dozen tales of distress, that would find their way into hearts as feeling as theirs. You will do as you see good; and we in the mean time shall remain convinced that you will do your best. Lady Austen will, no doubt, do something, for she has great sensibility and compassion.

Yours, my dear Unwin,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Olney, Nov, 5, 1782.

Charissime Taurorum—
Quot sunt, vel fuerunt, vel posthac aliis erunt in annis,

We shall rejoice to see you, and I just write to tell you so. Whatever else I want, I have, at least, this quality in common with publicans and sinners, that I love those that love me, and, for that reason, you in particular. Your warm and affectionate manner demands it of me. And, though I consider, your love as growing out of a mistaken expectation that you shall see me a spiritual man hereafter, I do not love you much the less for it. I only regret that I did not know you intimately in those happier days, when the frame of my heart and mind was such as might have made a connexion with me not altogether unworthy of you.

* Private Correspondence.

I add only Mrs. Unwin's remembrances, and that I am glad you believe me to be, what I truly am,

Your faithful and affectionate,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Nov. 11, 1782.

My dear Friend—Your shocking scrawl, as you term it, was however a very welcome one. The character indeed has not quite the neatness and beauty of an engraving; but if it cost me some pains to decypher it, they were well rewarded by the minute information it conveyed. I am glad your health is such that you have nothing more to complain of than may be expected on the down-hill side of life. If mine is better than yours, it is to be attributed, I suppose, principally to the constant enjoyment of country air and retirement; the most perfect regularity in matters of eating, drinking, and sleeping; and a happy emancipation from every thing that wears the face of business. I lead the life I always wished for, and, (the single circumstance of dependence excepted, (which, between ourselves, is very contrary to my predominant humour and disposition,) have no want left broad enough for another wish to stand upon.

You may not, perhaps, live to see your trees attain to the dignity of timber: I nevertheless approve of your planting, and the disinterested spirit that prompts you to it. Few people plant when

* Private Correspondence.

they are young; a thousand other less profitable amusements divert their attention; and most people, when the date of youth is once expired, think it too late to begin. I can tell you however for your comfort and encouragement, that when a grove which Major Cowper had planted was of eighteen years' growth, it was no small ornament to his grounds, and afforded as complete a shade as could be desired. Were I as old as your mother, in whose longevity I rejoice, and the more because I consider it as in some sort a pledge and assurance of yours, and should come to the possession of land worth planting, I would begin to-morrow, and even without previously insisting upon a bond from Providence that I should live five years longer.

I saw last week a gentleman who was lately at Hastings. I asked him where he lodged. He replied at P——'s. I next inquired after the poor man's wife, whether alive or dead. He answered, dead. So then, said I, she has scolded her last; and a sensible old man will go down to his grave in peace. Mr. P——, to be sure, is of no great consequence either to you or to me; but, having so fair an opportunity to inform myself about him, I could not neglect it. It gives me pleasure to learn somewhat of a man I knew a little of so many years since, and for that reason merely I mention the circumstance to you.

I find a single expression in your letter which needs correction. You say I carefully avoid paying you a visit at Wargrave. Not so; but connected as I happily am, and rooted where I am, and not

having travelled these twenty years—being besides of an indolent temper, and having spirits that cannot bear a bustle—all these are so many insuperables in the way. They are not however in yours; and if you and Mrs. Hill will make the experiment, you shall find yourselves as welcome here, both to me and to Mrs. Unwin, as it is possible you can be any where.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Nov. 1782.

My dear Friend—I am to thank you for a very fine cod, which came most opportunely to make a figure on our table, on an occasion that made him singularly welcome. I write, and you send me a fish. This is very well, but not altogether what I want. I wish to hear from you, because the fish, though he serves to convince me that you have me still in remembrance, says not a word of those that sent him; and, with respect to your and Mrs. Hill's health, prosperity, and happiness, leaves me as much in the dark as before. You are aware, likewise, that where there is an exchange of letters it is much easier to write. But I know the multiplicity of your affairs, and therefore perform my part of the correspondence as well as I can, convinced that you would not omit yours, if you could help it.

* Private Correspondence.

Three days since I received a note from old Mr. Small, which was more than civil—it was warm and friendly. The good veteran excuses himself for not calling upon me, on account of the feeble state in which a fit of the gout had left him. He tells me however that he has seen Mrs. Hill, and your improvements at Wargrave, which will soon become an ornament to the place. May they, and may you both live long to enjoy them! I shall be sensibly mortified if the season and his gout together should deprive me of the pleasure of receiving him here; for he is a man much to my taste, and quite an unique in this country.

My eyes are in general better than I remember them to have been since I first opened them upon this sublunary stage, which is now a little more than half a century ago. We are growing old; but this is between ourselves: the world knows nothing of the matter. Mr. Small tells me you look much as you did; and as for me, being grown rather plump, the ladies tell me I am as young as ever.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 18, 1782.

My dear William—On the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr. ——. I call him ours, because, having

experienced his kindness to myself, in a former instance, and in the present his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish, and your mother wishes too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to ——: he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money, but in this town, where the gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty would be to abuse it. We promise, however, that none shall touch it but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing. Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered, for waving your claim in

behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and the ragged of the earth, and it is not possible for our small party and small ability to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept, therefore, your share of their gratitude, and be convinced that, when they pray for a blessing upon those who relieved their wants, He that answers that prayer, and when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laugh, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have. Well, they do not always laugh so innocently and at so small an expense, for, in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle*, a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend nor so able a one as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy that nothing else so effectually disperses engages me sometimes in

the arduous task of being merry by force. And, strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps, had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain book—who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the mean time have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear William—Dr. Beattie is a respectable character.* I account him a man of sense, a philosopher, a scholar, a person of distinguished genius, and a good writer. I believe him too a Christian; with a profound reverence for the scripture, with great zeal and ability to enforce the belief of it, both which he exerts with the candour and good-manners of a gentleman: he seems well entitled to that allowance; and to deny it him, would impeach one's right to the appellation. With all these good things to recommend him, there can be no dearth of sufficient reasons to read his writings. You favoured me some years since with one of his

* The well-known author of "The Minstrel."

volumes; by which I was both pleased and instructed: and I beg you will send me the new one, when you can conveniently spare it, or rather bring it yourself, while the swallows are yet upon the wing: for the summer is going down apace.

You tell me you have been asked, if I am intent upon another volume? I reply, not at present, not being convinced that I have met with sufficient encouragement. I account myself happy in having pleased a few, but am not rich enough to despise the many. I do not know what sort of market my commodity has found, but, if a slack one, I must beware how I make a second attempt. My bookseller will not be willing to incur a certain loss; and I can as little afford it. Notwithstanding what I have said, I write, and am even now writing, for the press. I told you that I had translated several of the poems of Madame Guion. I told you too, or I am mistaken, that Mr. Bull designed to print them. That gentleman is gone to the sea-side with Mrs. Wilberforce, and will be absent six weeks. My intention is to surprise him at his return with the addition of as much more translation as I have already given him. This, however, is still less likely to be a popular work than my former. Men that have no religion would despise it; and men that have no religious experience would not understand it. But the strain of simple and unaffected piety in the original is sweet beyond expression. She sings like an angel, and for that very reason has found but few admirers. Other things I write

too, as you will see on the other side, but these merely for my amusement.†

TO MRS. NEWTON.*

Olney, Nov. 23, 1782.

My dear Madam—Accept my thanks for the trouble you take in vending my poems, and still more for the interest you take in their success. My authorship is undoubtedly pleased, when I hear that they are approved either by the great or the small; but to be approved by the great as Horace observed many years ago, is fame indeed. Having met with encouragement, I consequently wish to write again; but wishes are a very small part of the qualifications necessary for such a purpose. Many a man, who has succeeded tolerably well in his first attempt, has spoiled all by the second. But it just occurs to me that I told you so once before, and, if my memory had served me with the intelligence a minute sooner, I would not have repeated the observation now.

The winter sets in with great severity. The rigour of the season, and the advanced price of grain, are very threatening to the poor. It is well with those that can feed upon a promise, and wrap themselves up warm in the robe of salvation. A good fire-side and a well-spread table are but very indifferent substitutes for these better accommoda-

† This letter closed with the English and Latin verses on the loss of the Royal George, inserted before.

* Private Correspondence.

tions; so very indifferent, that I would gladly exchange them both for the rags and the unsatisfied hunger of the poorest creature that looks forward with hope to a better world, and weeps tears of joy in the midst of penury and distress. What a world is this! How mysteriously governed, and in appearance left to itself! One man, having squandered thousands at a gaming-table, finds it convenient to travel; gives his estate to somebody to manage for him; amuses himself a few years in France and Italy; returns, perhaps, wiser than he went, having acquired knowledge which, but for his follies, he would never have acquired; again makes a splendid figure at home, shines in the senate, governs his country as its minister, is admired for his abilities, and, if successful, adored at least by a party. When he dies he is praised as a demi-god, and his monument records every thing but his vices. The exact contrast of such a picture is to be found in many cottages at Olney. I have no need to describe them; you know the characters I mean. They love God, they trust him, they pray to him in secret, and, though he means to reward them openly, the day of recompense is delayed. In the mean time they suffer every thing that infirmity and poverty can inflict upon them. Who would suspect, that has not a spiritual eye to discern it, that the fine gentleman was one whom his Maker had in abhorrence, and the wretch last mentioned dear to him as the apple of his eye! It is no wonder that the world, who are not in the secret, find themselves obliged, some of them, to doubt a Providence, and others

absolutely to deny it, when almost all the real virtue there is in it is to be found living and dying in a state of neglected obscurity, and all the vices of others cannot exclude them from the privilege of worship and honour! But behind the curtain the matter is explained; very little, however, to the satisfaction of the great.

If you ask me why I have written thus, and to you especially, to whom there was no need to write thus, I can only reply, that, having a letter to write, and no news to communicate, I picked up the first subject I found, and pursued it as far as was convenient for my purpose.

Mr. Newton and I are of one mind on the subject of patriotism. Our dispute was no sooner begun than it ended. It would be well perhaps, if, when two disputants begin to engage, their friends would hurry each into a separate chaise, and order them to opposite points of the compass. Let one travel twenty miles east, the other, as many west; then let them write their opinions by the post. Much altercation and chafing of the spirit would be prevented; they would sooner come to a right understanding, and, running away from each other, would carry on the combat more judiciously, in exact proportion to the distance.

My love to that gentleman, if you please; and tell him that, like him, though I love my country, I hate its follies and its sins, and had rather see it scourged in mercy than judicially hardened by prosperity.

Yours, my dear Madam, as ever,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Dec. 7, 1782.

My dear Friend—At seven o'clock this evening, being the seventh of December, I imagine I see you in your box at the coffee-house. No doubt the waiter, as ingenious and adroit as his predecessors were before him, raises the tea-pot to the ceiling with his right hand, while in his left the tea-cup descending almost to the floor, receives a limpid stream; limpid in its descent, but no sooner has it reached its destination, than frothing and foaming to the view, it becomes a roaring syllabub. This is the nineteenth winter since I saw you in this situation; and if nineteen more pass over me before I die, I shall still remember a circumstance we have often laughed at.

How different is the complexion of your evenings and mine!—yours, spent amid the ceaseless hum that proceeds from the inside of fifty noisy and busy periwigs; mine, by a domestic fire-side, in a retreat as silent as retirement can make it, where no noise is made but what we make for our own amusement. For instance, here are two rustics and your humble servant in company. One of the ladies has been playing on the harpsichord, while I with the other have been playing at battledore and shuttlecock. A little dog in the mean time, howling under the chair of the former, performed in the vocal way to admiration. This entertainment over, I began my letter, and, having nothing more important to com-

* Private Correspondence.

municate, have given you an account of it. I know you love dearly to be idle, when you can find an opportunity to be so; but, as such opportunities are rare with you, I thought it possible that a short description of the idleness I enjoy might give you pleasure. The happiness we cannot call our own we yet seem to possess, while we sympathise with our friends who can.

The papers tell me that peace is at hand, and that it is at a great distance; that the siege of Gibraltar is abandoned, and that it is to be still continued. It is happy for me, that, though I love my country, I have but little curiosity. There was a time when these contradictions would have distressed me; but I have learnt by experience that it is best for little people like myself to be patient, and to wait till time affords the intelligence which no speculations of theirs can ever furnish.

I thank you for a fine cod with oysters, and hope that ere long I shall have to thank you for procuring me Elliott's medicines. Every time I feel the least uneasiness in either eye, I tremble lest, my Æsculapius being departed, my infallible remedy should be lost for ever. Adieu. My respects to Mrs. Hill.

Yours, faithfully,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 19, 1783.

My dear William—Not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a

scene of most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement not that our society is much multiplied. The addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *château*. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the afternoon wind thread. Thus did Hercules and Sampson, and thus do I; and, were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Having no frank, I cannot send you Mr. ——'s two letters, as I intended. We corresponded as long as the occasion required, and then ceased. Charmed with his good sense, politeness, and liberality to the poor, I was indeed ambitious of continuing a correspondence with him, and told him so. Perhaps I had done more prudently had I never proposed it. But warm hearts are not famous for wisdom, and mine was too warm to be very considerate on such an occasion. I have not heard from him since, and have long given up all expectation of it. I know he is too busy a man to have leisure for me, and I ought to have recollected it sooner. He found time to do much good, and to employ us, as his agents, in doing it, and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him, and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remit-

tances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because, intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure, that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend as this many a day; nor has there been an instance, at any time, of a few families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry, by which their debts being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before; but now it answers: it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.*

I wish that, by Mr. ——'s assistance, your purpose in behalf of the prisoners may be effectuated. A pen so formidable as his might do much good, if properly directed. The dread of a bold censure is ten times more moving than the most eloquent persuasion. They that cannot feel for others are the persons of all the world who feel most sensibly for themselves.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

* The benevolent character here alluded to is John Thornton, Esq.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Jan. 26, 1783.

My dear Friend—It is reported among persons f the best intelligence at Olney—the barber, the choolmaster, and the drummer of a corps quartered t this place—that the belligerent powers are at last econciled, the articles of the treaty adjusted, and hat peace is at the door.† I saw this morning at ine o'clock a group of about twelve figures very losely engaged in a conference, as I suppose, upon he same subject. The scene of consultation was a lacksmith's shed, very comfortably screened from he wind, and directly opposed to the morning sun. Some held their hands behind them, some had them olded across their bosom, and others had thrust hem into their breeches pockets. Every man's osture bespoke a pacific turn of mind; but, the listance being too great for their words to reach ne, nothing transpired. I am willing, however, to ope that the secret will not be a secret long, and hat you and I, equally interested in the event, hough not perhaps equally well-informed, shall soon ave an opportunity to rejoice in the completion of t. The powers of Europe have clashed with each ther to a fine purpose;‡ that the Americans, at ength declared independent, may keep themselves

* Private Correspondence.

† Preliminaries of peace with America and France were igned at Versailles Jan. 20th, 1783.

‡ France, Spain, and Holland, all of whom united with America against England.

so, if they can; and that what the parties, who have thought proper to dispute upon that point have wrested from each other in the course of the conflict may be, in the issue of it, restored to the proper owner. Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever; and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours. Your opinions and mine, I mean our political ones, are not exactly of a piece, yet I cannot think otherwise upon this subject than I have always done. England, more perhaps through the fault of her generals than her councils, has in some instances acted with a spirit of cruel animosity she was never chargeable with till now. But this is the worst that can be said. On the other hand, the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent, by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with her worst enemy for the accomplishment of their purpose. France, and of course Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part. They have stolen America from England, and, whether they are able to possess themselves of that jewel or not hereafter, it was doubtless what they intended. Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarrelled with a friend for an enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have thrashed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always, such, I have consequently

brighter hopes for England than her situation sometime since seemed to justify. She is the only injured party. America may perhaps call her the aggressor; but, if she were so, America has not only repelled the injury, but done a greater. As to the rest, if perfidy, treachery, avarice, and ambition, can prove their cause to have been a rotten one, those proofs are found upon them. I think, therefore, that, whatever scourge may be prepared for England on some future day, her ruin is not yet to be expected.

Acknowledge now that I am worthy of a place under the shed I described, and that I should make no small figure among the *quidnuncs* of Olney.

I wish the society you have formed may prosper. Your subjects will be of greater importance, and discussed with more sufficiency.† The earth is a grain of sand, but the spiritual interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Yours, my dear friend, as ever,

W. C.

The humour of the following letter in reference to the peace, is ingenious and amusing.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*

Olney, Feb. 2, 1783.

I give you joy of the restoration of that sincere

† This passage alludes to the formation of what was called "the Eclectic Society," consisting of several pious ministers, who statedly met for the purpose of mutual edification. It consisted of Newton, Scott, Cecil, Foster, &c. It is still in existence.

* Private Correspondence.

and firm friendship between the kings of England and France, that has been so long interrupted. It is a great pity, when hearts so cordially united are divided by trifles. Thirteen pitiful colonies, which the king of England chose to keep, and the king of France to obtain, if he could, have disturbed that harmony which would else no doubt have subsisted between those illustrious personages to this moment. If the king of France, whose greatness of mind is only equalled by that of his queen, had regarded them, unworthy of his notice as they were, with an eye of suitable indifference; or, had he thought it a matter deserving in any degree his princely attention, that they were in reality the property of his good friend the king of England; or, had the latter been less obstinately determined to hold fast his interest in them, and could he, with that civility and politeness in which monarchs are expected to excel, have entreated his majesty of France to accept a bagatelle, for which he seemed to have conceived so strong a predilection, all this mischief had been prevented. But monarchs, alas! crowned and sceptred as they are, are yet but men; they fall out, and are reconciled, just like the meanest of their subjects. I cannot, however, sufficiently admire the moderation and magnanimity of the king of England. His dear friend on the other side of the Channel has not indeed taken actual possession of the colonies in question, but he has effectually wrested them out of the hands of their original owner, who, nevertheless, letting fall the extinguisher of patience upon

the flame of his resentment, and glowing with no other flame than that of the sincerest affection, embraces the king of France again, gives him Senegal and Goree in Africa, gives him the islands he had taken from him in the West, gives him his conquered territories in the East, gives him a fishery upon the banks of Newfoundland; and, as if all this were too little, merely because he knows that Louis has a partiality for the king of Spain, gives to the latter an island in the Mediterranean, which thousands of English had purchased with their lives; and in America all that he wanted, at least all that he could ask. No doubt there will be great cordiality between this royal trio for the future: and, though wars may perhaps be kindled between their posterity some ages hence, the present generation shall never be witnesses of such a calamity again. I expect soon to hear that the queen of France, who just before this rupture happened, made the queen of England a present of a watch, has, in acknowledgment of all these acts of kindness, sent her also a seal wherewith to ratify the treaty. Surely she can do no less.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Feb. 8, 1783.

My dear Friend—When I consider the peace as the work of our ministers, and reflect that, with

* Private Correspondence.

more wisdom, or more spirit, they might perhaps have procured a better, I confess it does not please me.* Such another peace would ruin us, I suppose, as effectually as a war protracted to the extremest inch of our ability to bear it. I do not think it just that the French should plunder us and be paid for doing it; nor does it appear to me that there was absolute necessity for such tameness on our part as we discover in the present treaty. We give away all that is demanded, and receive nothing but what was our own before. So far as this stain upon our national honour, and this diminution of our national property, are a judgment upon our iniquities, I submit, and have no doubt but that ultimately it will be found to be judgment mixed with mercy. But, so far as I see it to be the effect of French knavery and British despondency, I feel it as a disgrace, and grumble at it as a wrong. I dislike it the more, because the peacemaker has

* Lord Shelburne, who made this peace, was taunted in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox with having been previously averse to it, and even of having said that, *when the independence of America should be granted, the sun of Britain would have set; and that the recognition of its independence deserved to be stained with the blood of the minister who should sign it.* It was in allusion to this circumstance that Mr. Fox applied to him the following ludicrous distich:

You've done a noble deed, in Nature's spite,
Tho' you think you are wrong, yet I'm sure you are right.

Lord Shelburne's defence was, that he was compelled to the measure, and not so much the author as the instrument of it. See *Parliamentary Debates* of that time.

been so immoderately praised for his performance, which is, in my opinion, a contemptible one enough. Had he made the French smart for their baseness, I would have praised him too; a minister should have shown his wisdom by securing some points, at least, for the benefit of his country. A school-boy might have made concessions. After all perhaps the worst consequence of this awkward business will be dissension in the two Houses, and dissatisfaction throughout the kingdom. They that love their country will be grieved to see her trampled upon; and they that love mischief will have a fair opportunity of making it. Were I a member of the Commons, even with the same religious sentiments as impress me now, I should think it my duty to condemn it.

You will suppose me a politician; but in truth I am nothing less. These are the thoughts that occur to me while I read the newspaper; and, when I have laid it down, I feel myself more interested in the success of my early cucumbers than in any part of this great and important subject. If I see them droop a little, I forget that we have been many years at war; that we have made an humiliating peace; that we are deeply in debt, and unable to pay. All these reflections are absorbed at once in the anxiety I feel for a plant, the fruit of which I cannot eat when I have procured it. How wise, how consistent, how respectable a creature is man!

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her kind letter, and for executing her commissions. We truly love you both, think of you often, and one

of us prays for you;—the other will, when he can pray for himself.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Feb. 13, 1783.

My dear Friend—In writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and self, with its concerns, is always interesting to a friend.

You may think perhaps that, having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so; I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published, except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mrs. Unwin would send to the "Public Advertiser," perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favours, which my modesty will not permit me to specify, except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress, a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin at Passy. These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who according to Chaucer was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Feb. 20, 1783.

Suspecting that I should not have hinted at Dr.

'ranklin's encomium under any other influence han that of vanity, I was several times on the oint of burning my letter for that very reason. 3ut, not having time to write another by the same ost, and believing that you would have the grace o pardon a little self-complacency in an author on o trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin natually leads to another and a greater, and thus it appens now, for I have no way to gratify your uriosity, but by transcribing the letter in question. t is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to an cquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the olume to him without my knowledge.

"Passy,* May 8, 1782.

"Sir, I received the letter you did me the onour of writing to me, and am much obliged by our kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry had long since left me, but there is omething so new in the manner, so easy, and yet o correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"B. FRANKLIN."

* A beautiful village near Paris, on the road to Versailles.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

My dear Friend—Great revolutions happen in this ants' nest of ours. One emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another; parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together,* and like the coruscations of the Northern Aurora amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile, and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily

* This expression, as well as the allusion to Nebuchadnezzar's image, refers to the famous coalition ministry, under Lord North and Mr. Fox.

›tal. Our friendship is dead and buried; is the only surviving one of all with which I ıce honoured.

Adieu.

W. C.

sarcasm conveyed in the close of this letter, idently pointed at Lord Thurlow, is severe, ɜt seems to be merited. It will be remem- that Lord Thurlow and Cowper were on of great intimacy when at Westminster , though separated in after-life; that Cowper ıuently presented him with a copy of his , accompanied by a letter, reminding him of former friendship; and that his lordship l him with forgetfulness and neglect. It is owever, to the memory of Lord Thurlow, to hat instances are not wanting to prove the ›lence of his character. When the south of e was recommended to Dr. Johnson, to reno- is declining strength, he generously offered to :e the sum of five hundred pounds for that ıe.*

ought we to forget Lord Thurlow's treatment poet Crabbe. The latter presented to him ' his poems. "I have no time," said Lord ›w, "to read verses; my avocations do not : it." "There was a time," retorted the poet, ı the encouragement of literature was con- l to be a duty appertaining to the illustrious

* See Murphy's Life of Johnson.

station which your lordship holds." Lord Thurlow frankly acknowledged his error, and nobly redeemed it. "I ought," he observed, "to have noticed your poem, and I heartily forgive your rebuke:" and in proof of his sincerity he generously transmitted the sum of one hundred pounds, and subsequently gave him preferment in the church.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Feb. 24, 1783.

My dear Friend—A weakness in one of my eyes may possibly shorten my letter, but I mean to make it as long as my present materials, and my ability to write, can suffice for.

I am almost sorry to say that I am reconciled to the peace, being reconciled to it not upon principles of approbation but necessity. The deplorable condition of the country, insisted on by the friends of administration, and not denied by their adversaries, convinces me that our only refuge under Heaven was in the treaty with which I quarrelled. The treaty itself I find less objectionable than I did, Lord Shelburne having given a colour to some of the articles that makes them less painful in the contemplation. But my opinion upon the whole affair is, that now is the time (if indeed there is salvation for the country) for Providence to interpose to save it. A peace with the greatest political advantages would not have healed us; a peace with none may procrastinate our ruin for a season, but

* Private Correspondence.

cannot ultimately prevent it. The prospect may make all tremble who have no trust in God, and even they that trust may tremble. The peace will probably be of short duration; and in the ordinary course of things another war must end us. A great country in ruins will not be beheld with eyes of indifference, even by those who have a better country to look to. But with them all will be well at last.

As to the Americans, perhaps I do not forgive them as I ought; perhaps I shall always think of them with some resentment as the destroyers, intentionally the destroyers, of this country. They have pushed that point farther than the house of Bourbon could have carried it in half a century. I may be prejudiced against them, but I do not think them equal to the task of establishing an empire. Great men are necessary for such a purpose; and their great men, I believe, are yet unborn.* They have had passion and obstinacy enough to do us much mischief; but whether the event will be salutary to themselves or not, must wait for proof. I agree with you that it is possible America may become a land of extraordinary evangelical light; but at the same time, I cannot discover any thing in their new situation peculiarly favourable to such a supposition. They cannot have more liberty of conscience than they had; at least, if that liberty

* This anticipation has not been fulfilled. America has produced materials for national greatness, that have laid the foundation of a mighty empire; and both General Washington and Franklin were great men.

was under any restraint, it was a restraint of their own making. Perhaps a new settlement in church and state may leave them less.—Well—all will be over soon. The time is at hand when an empire will be established that shall fill the earth. Neither statesmen nor generals will lay the foundation of it, but it shall rise at the sound of the trumpet.

I am well in body, but with a mind that would wear out a frame of adamant; yet, upon *my* frame, which is not very robust, its effects are not discernible. Mrs. Unwin is in health. Accept our unalienable love to you both.

Yours, my dear friend, truly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Olney, March 7, 1783.

My dear Friend—When will you come and tell us what you think of the peace? Is it a good peace in itself, or a good peace only in reference to the ruinous condition of our country? I quarrelled most bitterly with it at first, finding nothing in the terms of it but disgrace and destruction to Great Britain. But, having learned since that we are already destroyed and disgraced, as much as we can be, I like it better, and think myself deeply indebted to the King of France for treating us with so much lenity. The olive-branch indeed has neither leaf nor fruit, but it is still an olive-branch.

* Private Correspondence.

Mr. Newton and I have exchanged several letters on the subject; sometimes considering, like grave politicians as we are, the state of Europe at large; sometimes the state of England in particular; sometimes the conduct of the house of Bourbon; sometimes that of the Dutch; but most especially that of the Americans. We have not differed perhaps very widely, nor even so widely as we seemed to do; but still we have differed. We have however managed our dispute with temper, and brought it to a peaceable conclusion. So far at least we have given proof of a wisdom which abler politicians than myself would do well to imitate.

How do you like your northern mountaineers?* Can a man be a good Christian that goes without breeches? You are better qualified to solve me this question than any man I know, having, as I am informed, preached to many of them, and conversed, no doubt, with some. You must know I love a Highlander, and think I can see in them what Englishmen once were, but never will be again. Such have been the effects of luxury!

You know that I kept two hares. I have written nothing since I saw you but an epitaph on one of them, which died last week. I send you the *first* impression of it.

Here lies, &c.†

Believe me, my dear friend, affectionately yours,
W. C.

* Scotch Highlanders, quartered at Newport Pagnel, where Mr. Bull lived.

† Vide Cowper's Poems.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, March 7, 1783.

My dear Friend—Were my letters composed of materials worthy of your acceptance, they should be longer. There is a subject upon which they who know themselves interested in it are never weary of writing. That subject is not within my reach; and there are few others that do not soon fatigue me. Upon these, however, I might possibly be more diffuse, could I forget that I am writing to *you*, to whom I think it just as improper and absurd to send a sheet full of trifles, as it would be to allow myself that liberty, were I writing to one of the four evangelists. But, since you measure *me* with so much exactness, give me leave to requite you in your own way. *Your* manuscript indeed is close, and I do not reckon *mine* very lax. You make no margin, it is true; if you did, you would have need of their Lilliputian art, who can enclose the creed within the circle of a shilling; for upon the nicest comparison I find your paper an inch smaller every way than mine. Were my writing therefore as compact as yours, my letters *with* a margin would be as long as yours without one. Let this consideration, added to that of their futility, prevail with you to think them, if not long, yet long enough.

Yesterday a body of Highlanders passed through Olney. They are part of that regiment which lately

* Private Correspondence.

mutinied at Portsmouth. Convinced to a man that General —— had sold them to the East India Company, they breathe nothing but vengeance, and swear they will pull down his house in Scotland, as soon as they arrive there. The rest of them are quartered at Dunstable, Woburn, and Newport; in all eleven hundred. A party of them, it is said, are to continue some days at Olney. None of their principal officers are with them; either conscious of guilt, or at least knowing themselves to be suspected as privy to and partners in the iniquitous bargain, they fear the resentment of the corps. The design of government seems to be to break them into small divisions, that they may find themselves, when they reach Scotland, too weak to do much mischief. Forty of them attended Mr. Bull, who found himself singularly happy in an opportunity to address himself to a flock bred upon the Caledonian mountains. He told them he would walk to John O'Groat's house to hear a soldier pray. They are in general so far religious that they will hear none but evangelical preaching; and many of them are said to be truly so. Nevertheless, General ——'s skull was in some danger among them; for he was twice felled to the ground with the butt-end of a musquet. The sergeant-major rescued him, or he would have been for ever rendered incapable of selling Highlanders to the India Company. I am obliged to you for your extract from Mr. Bowman's letter. I feel myself sensibly pleased by the approbation of men of taste and learning; but that my vanity may not get too much to windward, my spirits are kept under by a

total inability to renew my enterprises in the poetical way.

We are tolerably well, and love you both.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April 5, 1783.

My dear Friend—When one has a letter to write, there is nothing more useful than to make a beginning. In the first place, because, unless it be begun, there is no good reason to hope it will ever be ended; and secondly, because the beginning is half the business, it being much more difficult to put the pen in motion at first, than to continue the progress of it, when once moved.

Mrs. C——'s illness, likely to prove mortal, and seizing her at such a time, has excited much compassion in my breast, and in Mrs. Unwin's, both for her and her daughter. To have parted with a child she loves so much, intending soon to follow her; to find herself arrested before she could set out, and at so great a distance from her most valued relations; her daughter's life too threatened by a disorder not often curable, are circumstances truly affecting. She has indeed much natural fortitude, and, to make her condition still more tolerable, a good Christian hope for her support. But so it is, that the distresses of those who least need our

ity excite it most; the amiableness of the character engages our sympathy, and we mourn for persons for whom perhaps we might more reasonably rejoice. There is still however a possibility that she may recover; an event we *must* wish for, though for her to depart would be far better. Thus we would always withhold from the skies those who alone can reach them, at least till we are ready to bear them company.

Present our love, if you please, to Miss C——. I saw in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for last month, an account of a physician who has discovered a new method of treating consumptive cases, which has succeeded wonderfully in the trial. He finds the seat of the distemper in the stomach, and cures it principally by emetics. The old method of encountering the disorder has proved so unequal to the task, that I should be much inclined to any new practice that comes well recommended. He is spoken of as a sensible and judicious man, but his name I have forgot.

Our love to all under your roof, and in particular to Miss Catlett, if she is with you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, April 20, 1783.

My dear Friend—My device was intended to represent not my own heart, but the heart of a

* Private Correspondence.

Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing, pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses. I have the thorn without the rose. My briar is a wintry one; the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains. My days are spent in vanity, and it is impossible for me to spend them otherwise. No man upon earth is more sensible of the unprofitableness of a life like mine than I am, or groans more heavily under the burthen. The time when I seem to be most rationally employed is when I am reading. My studies however are very much confined, and of little use, because I have no books but what I borrow, and nobody will lend me a memory. My own is almost worn out. I read the Biographia and the Review. If all the readers of the former had memories like mine, the compilers of that work would in vain have laboured to rescue the great names of past ages from oblivion, for what I read to-day I forget to-morrow. A by-stander might say, This is rather an advantage, the book is always new;—but I beg the by-stander's pardon; I can recollect, though I cannot remember, and with the book in my hand I recognise those passages which, without the book, I should never have thought of more. The Review pleases me most, because, if the contents escape me, I regret them less, being a very supercilious reader of most modern writers. Either I dislike the subject, or the manner of treating it; the style is affected, or the matter is disgusting.

* * * *

I see ——— (though he was a learned man, and sometimes wrote like a wise one,) labouring under

invincible prejudices against the truth and its professors; heterodox in his opinions upon some religious subjects, and reasoning most weakly in support of them. How has he toiled to prove that the perdition of the wicked is not eternal, that there may be repentance in hell, and that the devils may be saved at last: thus establishing, as far as in him lies, the belief of a purgatory. When I think of him, I think too of some who shall say hereafter, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wondrous works? Then shall he say unto them, Depart from me, for I never knew you." But perhaps he might be enlightened in his last moments, and saved in the very article of dissolution. It is much to be wished, and indeed hoped, that he was. Such a man reprobated in the great day would be the most melancholy spectacle of all that shall stand at the left hand hereafter. But I do not think that *many*, or indeed *any*, will be found there, who in their lives were sober, virtuous, and sincere, truly pious in the use of their little light, and, though ignorant of God, in comparison with some others, yet sufficiently informed to know that He is to be feared, loved, and trusted. An operation is often performed within the curtains of a dying bed, in behalf of such men, that the nurse and the doctor (I mean the doctor and the nurse) have no suspicion of. The soul makes but one step out of darkness into light, and makes that step without a witness. My brother's case has made me very charitable in my opinion about the future state of such men.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, May 5, 1783.

You may suppose that I did not hear Mr. ——— preach, but I heard of him. How different is that plainness of speech which a spiritual theme requires, from that vulgar dialect which this gentleman has mistaken for it! Affectation of every sort is odious; especially in a minister, and more especially an affectation that betrays him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate. Truth indeed needs no ornament, neither does a beautiful person; but to clothe it therefore in rags, when a decent habit was at hand, would be esteemed preposterous and absurd. The best-proportioned figure may be made offensive by beggary and filth, and even truths, which came down from heaven, though they cannot forego their nature, may be disguised and disgraced by unsuitable language. It is strange that a pupil of yours should blunder thus. You may be consoled however by reflecting, that he could not have erred so grossly if he had not totally and wilfully departed both from your instruction and example. Were I to describe your style in two words, I should call it plain and neat, *simplicem munditiis*, and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment. He that speaks to be understood by a congregation of rustics, and yet in terms that would not offend academical ears, has found the happy medium. This is certainly practicable to men of taste and judgment,

and the practice of a few proves it. *Hactenus de concionando.*

We are truly glad to hear that Miss Catlett is better, and heartily wish you more promising accounts from Scotland. *Debemur morti nos nostraque.* We all acknowledge the debt, but are seldom pleased when those we love are required to pay it. The demand will find you prepared for it.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, May 12, 1783.

My dear Friend—A letter written from such a place as this is a creation; and creation is a work for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit,* is a maxim that applies itself in every case, where Deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know that although nothing could be the result, even that nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no news, I can tell you at least that I esteem you highly; that my friendship with you and yours is the only balm of my life; a comfort sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

In the "Review" of last month, I met with an account of a sermon preached by Mr. Paley, at the consecration of his friend, Bishop L. The critic admires and extols the preacher, and devoutly prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth more such labourers into his vineyard. I rather differ from him in opinion, not being able to conjecture in what respect the vineyard will be benefited by such a measure. He is certainly ingenious, and has stretched his ingenuity to the uttermost, in order to exhibit the church established, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the most favourable point of view. I lay it down for a rule that when much ingenuity is necessary to gain an argument credit, that argument is unsound at bottom. So is his, and so are all the petty devices by which he seeks to enforce it. He says first, "that the appointment of various orders in the church is attended with this good consequence, that each class of people is supplied with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate on terms of equality." But, in order to effect this good purpose, there ought to be at least three parsons in every parish, one for the gentry, one for traders and mechanics, and one for the lowest of the vulgar. Neither is it easy to find many parishes, where the laity at large have any society with their minister at all. This therefore is fanciful, and a mere invention: in the next place he says it gives a dignity to the ministry itself, and the clergy share in the respect paid to their superiors. Much good may such participation do them! They themselves know how

ittle it amounts to. The dignity a parson derives rom the lawn sleeves and square cap of his diocesan will never endanger his humility.

Pope says truly—

> Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
> The rest is all but leather or prunella.

Again—"Rich and splendid situations in the church have been justly regarded as prizes, held out to invite persons of good hopes and ingenuous attainments." Agreed. But the prize held out in the Scripture is of a very different kind; and our ecclesiastical baits are too often snapped by the worthless, and persons of no attainments at all. They are indeed incentives to avarice and ambition, but not to those acquirements, by which only the ministerial function can be adorned—zeal for the salvation of men, humility, and self-denial. Mr. Paley and I therefore cannot agree.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

We think Cowper has treated Paley, as well as his subject, with no small portion of severity. What Paley's arguments may have been, in establishing his first position, we know not, but we should have expected that the poet would have admitted the principle, however he might have disapproved of the comment. There was a time when the proper constitution of a Christian church furnished a subject of inquiry that engaged the councils of princes, convulsed this empire to its basis,

and left the traces of an awful desolation behind. We allude to the times of Charles the First, and to the momentous events that characterized that period. In the present age, the matters in dispute are greatly changed. The important question now agitated is the lawfulness of the union of church and state, so far as that lawfulness is decided by an appeal to the authority of Scripture. Upon this subject it is not our intention to enter. For able and masterly argument, in defence of establishments, we beg to refer to the work of Dr. Chalmers,* and to the two last Visitation Charges of Chancellor Dealtry. We trust, however, that we may be allowed to express our deep conviction that the timely removal of abuses is not only essential to the efficiency and preservation of the church of England, but also imperatively due to our own honour and credit, to the glory of God, and to the advancement of true religion.

In the mean time we would appeal to every intelligent observer, whether there has ever been a period, in the annals of our church, more characterized by an acknowledged increase of true piety than in the era in which we are now writing? —whether there is not a perceptible revival of sound doctrine in our pulpits, and of devotedness and zeal in the lives of the clergy? Appealing then to these facts, which he that runneth may read, may we not, though in the spirit of profound humiliation, exclaim with the wife of Manoah, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received

* See Dr. Chalmers on Establishments.

a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands; neither would he have shewed us all these things; nor would he, as at this time, have told us such things as these." *

Let, then, the sacred edifice be suffered to remain, built as it is on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; but let what time hath impaired, or infirmity hath disfigured, be restored and amended. And let this be the language of her friends, as well as of every honourable and conscientious opponent, which was once expressed by the celebrated Beza: "If now the reformed churches of England, administered by the authority of bishops and archbishops, do hold on, as this hath happened to that church in our memory, that she hath had men of that calling, not only most notable martyrs of God, but also excellent pastors and doctors; let her, in God's name, enjoy this singular bounty of God, which I wish she may hold for ever."†

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, May 26, 1783.

I feel for my uncle,‡ and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connexion that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope however and

* Judges xiii. 23.

† "Fruatur sanè istâ singulari Dei beneficentiâ, quæ utinam illi sit perpetua."—*Beza. Resp. ad Sarav.* p. 111.

‡ Ashley Cowper, Esq., who had recently lost his wife.

doubt not but when he has had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family, which it is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long or so happily; but this, which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is however a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centred) and to see them step into the grave before them. In one respect, at least, this is a merciful appointment. When life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, May 31, 1783.

We rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs. C—— 's death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature indeed will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and Christian friend de-

rts, but the scripture so many more and so much ıre important reasons to rejoice, that, on such oc-ıions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, row is turned into joy. The law of our land is ronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it ıt he only demises. This, which is a fiction where monarch only is in question, in the case of a ıristian is reality and truth. He only lays aside a dy which it is his privilege to be encumbered with longer; and, instead of dying, in that moment he gins to live. But this the world does not under-ınd, therefore the kings of it must go on demising the end of the chapter.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Olney, June 3, 1783.

My dear Friend—My green-house, fronted with yrtles, and where I hear nothing but the pattering a fine shower and the sound of distant thunder, ınts only the fumes of your pipe to make it per-ctly delightful. Tobacco was not known in the ılden age. So much the worse for the golden age. his age of iron or lead would be insupportable with-ıt it; and therefore we may reasonably suppose at the happiness of those better days would have ıen much improved by the use of it. We hope at you and your son are perfectly recovered. The ason has been most unfavourable to animal life;

* Private Correspondence.

and I, who am merely animal, have suffered much by it.

Though I should be glad to write, I write little or nothing. The time for such fruit is not yet come; but I expect it, and I wish for it. I want amusement; and, deprived of that, have nothing to supply the place of it. I send you, however, according to my promise to send you every thing, two stanzas composed at the request of Lady Austen. She wanted words to a tune she much admired, and I gave her the following,

ON PEACE.

No longer I follow a sound, &c.*

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, June 8, 1783.

My dear William—Our severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the green-house. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption, my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double

* Vide Poems.

row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that, though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull of Newport—perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do, that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters, and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it—an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party! at other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either. He can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco—nothing is perfect——

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

On the other side I send you a something, a song

if you please, composed last Thursday: the incident happened the day before.*

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, June 13, 1783.

My dear Friend—I thank you for your Dutch communications. The suffrage of such respectable men must have given you much pleasure, a pleasure only to be exceeded by the consciousness you had before of having published truth, and of having served a good master by doing so.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history went no further: I never saw a work that I thought more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history applied to so good a purpose.† The facts incontestable, the grand observation upon them all irrefragable, and the style, in my judgment, incomparably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon.

* Here followed his song of "The Rose."

† Newton's "Review of Ecclesiastical History," so far as it proceeded, was much esteemed, but was incomplete. It had the merit, however, of suggesting to the Rev. Joseph Milner the first idea of his own more enlarged and valuable undertaking, on the same subject. In this work the excellent author pursued the design executed in part by Newton. Instead of exhibiting the history of Christianity as a mere record of facts and events, he traced the rise and progress of true religion, and its preservation through successive ages; and thus afforded an incontestable evidence of the superintending power and faithfulness of God.

I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it. You have no ear for such music, whoever may be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though you missed that freedom in writing which you found before. While you were at Olney, this was at least possible; in a state of retirement you had leisure, without which I suppose Paul himself could not have written his epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them.

The day of judgment is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare, a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference indeed will obtain in favour of the godly, which is, that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense an awful, event, yet it will find *them* prepared to meet it. But, the day being thus characterized, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture: some will look for it at one period, and some at another; we shall most of us prove at last to have been mistaken, and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof, till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject appear to me perfectly scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it, being however so singular, and of no importance to the happiness of mankind, and being

moreover difficult to swallow just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am and always have been a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the scriptures has seen fit to conceal he will not as the God of nature publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself and his purpose, if he designs a secret impenetrable in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible however for an observer of natural phenomena not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last still continue, though till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless sky. At eleven last night the moon was a dull red; she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally, I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere, but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time, in a country where it has not happened in my remembrance, even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder-storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor

so violent. Yesterday morning however, at seven o'clock, two fire-balls burst either on the steeple or close to it. William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue from the apertures in the steeple, as soon rendered it invisible: the noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard; you would have thought that a thousand sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called Mist's Journal: a name well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty however as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a poet nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Yours,

W. C.

It is worthy of being recorded that these singular appearances presented by the atmosphere and heavens, with accompanying thunder-storms, were prevalent in many parts of England. At Dover, the fog was of such long continuance, that the opposite shore could not be discerned for three weeks. In other places the storms of thunder and lightning were awful, and destructive both to life and property. But this phenomenon was not con-

fined to England only; it extended to France, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Spain, and even to some parts of Africa. In Paris, the appearances were so portentous, and the alarm so considerable, that the great astronomer Lalande addressed a letter to one of the journals, in order to compose the public mind. We subjoin it in a note for the gratification of the reader, and as illustrating his views on the subject.* In the preceding February occurred the

* "It is known to you that for some days past people have been incessantly inquiring what is the occasion of the thick dry fog which almost constantly covers the heavens? And, as this question is particularly put to astronomers, I think myself obliged to say a few words on the subject, more especially since a kind of terror begins to spread in society. It is said by some, that the disasters in Calabria were preceded by similar weather; and by others, that a dangerous comet reigns at present. In 1773 I experienced how fast conjectures of this kind, which begin amongst the ignorant, even in the most enlightened ages, proceed from mouth to mouth, till they reach the best societies, and find their way even to the public prints. The multitude, therefore, may easily be supposed to draw strange conclusions when they see the sun of a blood colour, shed a melancholy light, and cause a most sultry heat.

"This, however, is nothing more than a very natural effect from a hot sun, after a long succession of heavy rain. The first impression of heat has necessarily and suddenly rarefied a superabundance of watery particles, with which the earth was deeply impregnated, and given them, as they rose, a dimness and rarefaction not usual to common fogs.

"De La Lande."

The danger to which men of philosophical minds seem to be peculiarly exposed is the habit of accounting for the phenomena of nature too exclusively by the operation of mere secondary causes; while the supreme agency of a first Great Cause is too

calamitous earthquakes in Calabria and Sicily; by which solemn catastrophe the city of Messina was overthrown, and the greater portion of its population, consisting of thirty thousand souls, wholly destroyed This awful event was preceded by an horizon full of black intense fog, the earthquake next followed, with two successive shocks, and subsequently a whirlpool of fire issued from the earth, which completed the entire destruction of the noble and great edifices that still remained. We refer the reader for the terrible details of this afflicting calamity to the narrative of Sir William Hamilton, which cannot be read without alarm and terror. Nor can we conclude this statement without recalling to mind the impressive language of holy inspiration, as powerfully awakening feelings of awe at the majesty of God. "The earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth

much overlooked. The universality of these appearances, occurring at the same time in England, France, Italy, and so many other countries, awakens reflections of a more solemn cast, in a mind imbued with Christian principles. We agree with the philosopher, as far as he goes, in *his* solution of cause and effect, but we cannot rest there; with our principles we must go farther. He who reads Professor Barruel's work, and the concurring testimony adduced by Robison, as to the extent of infidelity and even atheism, gathering at that time in the different states of Europe, might, we think, see in these signs in the moon, and in the stars, and in the heavens, some intimations of impending judgments, which followed so shortly after; and evidences of the power and existence of that God, which many so impiously questioned and defied.

devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind." *

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, June 17, 1783.

My dear Friend—Your letter reached Mr. S— while Mr. —— was with him; whether it wrought any change in *his* opinion of that gentleman, as a preacher, I know not; but for my own part I give you full credit for the soundness and rectitude of *yours*. No man was ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is, and because it is so, grows angry if it be not treated with some management and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will bear perhaps to be stroked, though he will growl even under that operation, but, if you touch him roughly, he will bite. There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted, "he has given it them soundly," and if they do not tremble and confess that God is in him of a truth,

* Psalm xviii. 7—10.

he gives them up as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost for ever. But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify a conduct, which only proves that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him, if he were not himself deluded.

A people will always love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people. The old maxim, *Simile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified; therefore you were beloved at Olney, and, if you preached to the Chicksaws and Chactaws, would be equally beloved by them.

W. C.

Tenderness in a minister is a very important qualification, and indispensable to his success. The duty of it is enjoined in an apostolical precept, and the wisdom of it inculcated in another passage of scripture. "Speaking the truth in love." "He that winneth souls is wise." We have often thought that one reason why a larger portion of divine blessing fails to accompany the ministrations of the sanctuary, is the want of more affectionate expostulation, more earnest entreaty, and more tenderness and sympathy in the preacher. The heart that is unmoved by our reproof may perhaps yield to the persuasiveness of our appeal.

We fully admit that it is divine grace alone that can subdue the power of sin in the soul; but, in the whole economy of grace, as well as of Providence, there is always perceptible a wise adaptation of means to the end. Who is not impressed by the tenderness and earnest solicitations of St. Paul! Who can contemplate the Saviour weeping over Jerusalem, without emotions of the profoundest admiration! And who does not know that the spectacle of man's misery and guilt first suggested the great plan of redemption, and that the scheme of mercy which divine love devised in heaven dying love accomplished on earth!

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, June 19, 1783.

My dear Friend—The translation of your letters* into *Dutch* was news that pleased me *much*. I intended plain prose, but a rhyme obtruded itself, and I became poetical when I least expected it. When you wrote those letters, you did not dream that you were designed for an apostle to the Dutch. Yet so it proves, and such among many others are the advantages we derive from the art of printing—an art in which indisputably man was instructed by the same great teacher, who taught him to embroider for the service of the sanctuary, and which amounts almost to as great a blessing as the gift of tongues.

The summer is passing away, and hitherto has

* Newton's "Cardiphonia," a work of great merit and interest, and full of edification.

hardly been either seen or felt. Perpetual clouds intercept the influence of the sun, and for the most part there is an autumnal coldness in the weather, though we are almost upon the eve of the longest day.

We are well, and always mindful of you: be mindful of us, and assured that we love you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, July 27, 1783.

My dear Friend—You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave and perhaps some profitable observations might be made; but, those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative, and the reflection it might suggest, are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week and say, what did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—nothing! A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subject of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted: my passion

for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased. A circumstance I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus I am both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastile; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key—but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison-walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded that, were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects, which to all the world beside would be at least indifferent;

some of them, perhaps, such as the ragged thatch and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it.

> Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
> Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation, in every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always; Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say; which, as history is a thing to be said and not sung, is in my judgment very much to your advantage. A writer

that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense and a desire of doing good are the predominant features—but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

It is impossible to read the former part of the preceding letter without emotion. Who has not felt the force of local associations, and their power of presenting affecting recollections to the mind!

"I could not bear," says Pope, in one of his letters, "to have even an old post removed out of the way with which my eyes had been familiar from my youth."

Among the Swiss, the force of association is so strong, that it is known by the appellation of the "maladie du pays;" and it is recorded that on hearing one of their national airs in a foreign land, so overpowering was the effect that, though engaged in warfare at the time, they threw down their arms and returned to their own country. The emotions awakened by some of the Swiss airs, such as the "Rantz des Vaches," and the affecting pathos of "La suissesse au bord du lac," when heard on their native lakes, are always remembered by the traveller with delight. The feelings of a still higher kind connected with local associations are expressed with so much grace and eloquence in Dr. Johnson's

celebrated allusion to this subject, that we close our remarks by inserting the passage.—

"We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy, as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Aug. 4, 1783.

My dear William—I feel myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the inquiry you propose. But I am pretty well prepared for the

* See his Journey to the Western Islands.

worst, and, so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim, with success, at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and be not mortified, even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more than we have reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines; which I suppose, would suit no ear but a French one; neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But, to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior, perhaps, in true poetical merit to some of the very

best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and, if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the What do ye call it—" 'Twas when the seas were roaring." I have been well informed that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows this country ever saw, did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success, however, answered their wishes. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing in my judgment all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic, than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads and ballad-writers.—" A worthy subject," you will say, " for a man, whose head might be filled with better things;"—and it is filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics that may prove more amusing; as, for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the greenhouse. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against

the wall: the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and, on my return, was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him, and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but, casting my eye upon the other cage, perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it afforded him than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute, he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as, for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents. For at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I transcribe for you a piece of Madam Guion, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them.

Yours ever,

W. C.

The following letter contains a judicious and ex-
llent critique on the writings of Madame Guion,
d on the school of mystics to which she belonged.
ıe defect attributed to that school is too much
niliarity of address, and a warmth of devotional
rvour in their approach to the Deity, exceeding
e bounds of just propriety. There is, however,
ıch to quicken piety, and to elevate the affections
the heart.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Sept. 7, 1783.

My dear Friend—So long a silence needs an
ology. I have been hindered by a three-weeks'
ıit from our Hoxton friends,* and by a cold and
verish complaint which are but just removed.
The French poetess is certainly chargeable with
e fault you mention, though I thought it not so
ıring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured
leed, in all the translations I have made, to cure
r of that evil, either by the suppression of pas-
ges exceptionable upon that account, or by a more
ber and respectful manner of expression. Still,
wever, she will be found to have conversed fami-
rly with God, but I hope not fulsomely, nor so as
give reasonable disgust to a religious reader.
ıat God should deal familiarly with man, or, which
the same thing, that he should permit man to
al familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to
nceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when some

* Mr. and Mrs. Newton.

things are taken into consideration. Woe to the sinner, that shall dare to take a liberty with him that is not warranted by his word, or to which he himself has not encouraged him. When he assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the friend of man, as the brother of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man while he was on earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection. I doubt not, therefore, that it is possible to enjoy an access to him even now, unincumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This, however, can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him. And then I presume there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation, and, near as we come, we come no nearer to him than he is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our father. If we unbosom ourselves to him as to a friend, it is because he calls us friends, and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language he delights to hear from his people. But I confess that, through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other Christian privileges, is liable to abuse. There is a mixture of evil in every thing we do; indulgence encourages us to encroach; and, while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here I think is the point in which my authoress failed, and here it is that I have

particularly guarded my translation, not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is somewhat guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been alway impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed by the views she had of it.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Sept. 8, 1783.

My dear Friend—Mrs. Unwin would have answered your kind note from Bedford, had not a pain in her side prevented her. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with, while your disorder was most prevalent, though they were but reveries, and the offspring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind to the best subjects. I had none such—indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has any thing less than a fever really dangerous ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have

a strong head, and, perhaps for the same reason that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding. The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on, and in Bedfordshire it is reported, how truly I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. I heard lately of a clerk in a public office, whose chief employment it was for many years to administer oaths, who being light-headed in a fever, of which he died, spent the last week of his life, in crying day and night—" So help you God—kiss the book—give me a shilling." What a wretch in comparison with you!

Mr. Scott has been ill almost ever since you left us, and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clap on a blister by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even bishopricks themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and cheerful.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr. Bacon, and make him sensible that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If, in a state of mind that almost disqualifies me for society, I could possibly wish to form a new connexion, I should wish to know him; but I never shall, and, things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you; having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then

afford you by a communication of my present pains. But I have no claims of this sort upon Mr. Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both, with much affection, to Mrs. Newton, and to her and your Eliza: to Miss C——, likewise, if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes; but in the land to which she is going she will hold up her head and droop no more. A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life is better than the health of an antediluvian. Accept our united love.†

My dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Sept. 15, 1783.

My dear Friend—I have been lately more dejected and more distressed than usual; more harassed by dreams in the night, and more deeply poisoned by them in the following day. I know not what is portended by an alteration for the worse after eleven years of misery; but firmly believe that it is not designed as the introduction of a change for the better. You know not what I suffered while you were here, nor was there any need you should. Your friendship for me would have made you in some degree a partaker of my woes;

† The young lady here alluded to is Miss Eliza Cunningham, a niece of Mr. Newton's.

* Private Correspondence.

and your share in them would have been increased by your inability to help me. Perhaps, indeed, they took a keener edge from the consideration of your presence. The friend of my heart, the person with whom I had formerly taken sweet counsel, no longer useful to me as a minister, no longer pleasant to me as a Christian, was a spectacle that must necessarily add the bitterness of mortification to the sadness of despair. I now see a long winter before me, and am to get through it as I can. I know the ground before I tread upon it. It is hollow; it is agitated; it suffers shocks in every direction; it is like the soil of Calabria—all whirlpool and undulation.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Sept. 23, 1783.

My dear Friend—We are glad that, having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves the sufferer debilitated to the last degree, you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. *Your* health and strength are useful to others, and, in that view, important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up, I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits that

seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time and still makes me very unfit for my favourite occupations, writing and reading: so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burthen.

John —— has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die, but in this only instance of prophetic exertion he seems to have been mistaken: he has however been very near it. I should have told you that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you know, though a silent has been a very steady professor. He indeed fights battles and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at his feats, foreign academies do not seek him for a member, he will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffeta up to heaven. But he will go thither himself.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. ——. I had sent him notice of our visit a week before, which, like a contemplative studious man as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance of being uninhabited. After waiting some time, however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly that his garden seems a spot contrived only for the growth of melancholy, but being always affected by it in the same way, I cannot help it. He shewed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very

refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits with his back against one brick wall and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expense, and with no small labour; several loads of earth were removed in order to make it, which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject, but he is not seldom low-spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's Voyages when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading aloud.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Sept. 29, 1783.

My dear William—We are sorry that you and your household partake so largely of the ill effects of this unhealthy season. You are happy however in having hitherto escaped the epidemic fever, which has prevailed much in this part of the king-

dom, and carried many off. Your mother and I are well. After more than a fortnight's indisposition, which slight appellation is quite inadequate to the description of all I suffered, I am at length restored by a grain or two of emetic tartar. It is a tax I generally pay in autumn. By this time, I hope, a purer ether than we have seen for months, and these brighter suns than the summer had to boast, have cheered your spirits, and made your existence more comfortable. We are rational: but we are animal too; and therefore subject to the influences of the weather. The cattle in the fields show evident symptoms of lassitude and disgust in an unpleasant season; and we, their lords and masters, are constrained to sympathize with them: the only difference between us is, that they know not the cause of their dejection, and we do, but, for our humiliation, are equally at a loss to cure it. Upon this account I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy, in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to their influence upon himself; and, while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project indeed supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern.* One generation blows bubbles, and

* Dr. Franklin.

the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philosopher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes to which the indolent are subject, and finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries, though eventually perhaps they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him as he does at new phenomena in the heavens, and perhaps understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence, to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honours while he lives, and, if another strips them off when he has been dead a century, it is no great matter; he can then make shift without them.

I have said a great deal upon this subject, and know not what it all amounts to. I did not intend a syllable of it when I began. But, *currente calamo*, I stumbled upon it. My end is to amuse myself and you. The former of these two points is secured. I shall be happy if I do not miss the latter.

By the way, what is your opinion of these air-balloons? I am quite charmed with the discovery. Is it not possible (do you suppose?) to convey such a quantity of inflammable air into the stomach and abdomen, that the philosopher, no longer gravitating to a centre, shall ascend by his own comparative levity, and never stop till he has reached the medium exactly *in equilibrio* with himself? May he *not*, by the help of a pasteboard rudder attached to

his posteriors, steer himself in that purer element with ease, and again by a slow and gradual discharge of his aërial contents, recover his former tendency to the earth, and descend without the smallest danger or inconvenience? These things are worth inquiry, and (I dare say) they will be inquired after as they deserve: the *pennæ non homini datæ* are likely to be less regretted than they were; and perhaps a flight of academicians and a covey of fine ladies may be no uncommon spectacle in the next generation. A letter which appeared in the public prints last week convinces me that the learned are not without hopes of some such improvement upon this discovery. The author is a sensible and ingenious man, and, under a reasonable apprehension that the ignorant may feel themselves inclined to laugh upon a subject that affects himself with the utmost seriousness, with much good manners and management bespeaks their patience, suggesting many good consequences that may result from a course of experiments upon this machine, and amongst others, that it may be of use in ascertaining the shape of continents and islands, and the face of wide extended and far distant countries, an end not to be hoped for, unless by these means of extraordinary elevation, the human prospect may be immensely enlarged, and the philosopher, exalted to the skies, attain a view of the whole hemisphere at once. But whether he is to ascend by the mere inflation of his person, as hinted above, or whether in a sort of band-box, supported upon balloons, is not yet

apparent, nor (I suppose) even in his own idea perfectly decided.

Yours,

My dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1783.

My dear Friend—It is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind, in the present as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should, through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes, the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from heaven to publish peace between man and his Maker—the Prince of Peace himself comes to confirm and establish it, and war, hatred, and desolation, are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book which none of them understand. He that is slain dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him, and he that slew him is equally con-

vinced that he has done God service.* In reality, they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be, that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray, preposterous and shocking in the extreme, would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present? even because they have exchanged a zeal that was no better than madness for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd. The Holy Sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations called Christian, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because he that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured them indeed of the misery of an abused understanding; but, together with the delusion, they have lost the

* The bitter dissensions of professing Christians have always afforded ground for the ridicule and scoff of the infidel. Voltaire parodied those well-known words, "See how these Christians love one another," in the following sarcastic manner,—"See how these Christians *hate* one another." It is related of Charles the Fifth, that, after his voluntary abdication of the throne, he amused himself by the occupation of making watches; and, finding that he never could, by any contrivance, make two watches to agree together, he exclaimed against his own folly, in having spent so large a portion of his life in endeavouring to make men agree on the subject of religion.

substance, and, for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it, have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here then we see the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials, but, with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith, but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain; that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the gospel have been more dangerous to its interests than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries, and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its divine original and nature might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth have proved indeed a stumbling-block to individuals; the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back; but the flock of Christ is still nourished and still increases, notwithstanding the unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the Voyages, which

I received † and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor; my main-sail is rent into shreds; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from the fire-side. The principal fruits of these circuits that have been made round the globe seem likely to be the amusement of those that staid at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expense of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian, and, having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country—fine sport to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance, will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them; their poverty is indeed their mercy.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Oct. 10, 1783.

My dear Friend—I have nothing to say on political subjects, for two reasons; first, because I know none that at present would prove very amusing,

† Hawkesworth's.

* Private Correspondence.

especially to you, who love your country; and, secondly, because there are none that I have the vanity to think myself qualified to discuss. I must beg leave, however, to rejoice a little at the failure of the Caisse d'Escomptes, because I think the French have well deserved it; and to mourn equally that the Royal George cannot be weighed: the rather, because I wrote two poems, one Latin and one English, to encourage the attempt.* The former of these only having been published, which the sailors would understand but little of, may be the reason, perhaps, why they have not succeeded. Believe me, my friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

* An elegant monument, erected above the grave of thirty-nine sailors, whose bodies were subsequently found, was erected in the churchyard of Portsea, to commemorate the melancholy loss of the Royal George. We subjoin the interesting epitaph, which is inscribed on black marble, in gold letters.

"READER,
WITH SOLEMN THOUGHT
SURVEY THIS GRAVE,
AND REFLECT
ON THE UNTIMELY DEATH
OF THY FELLOW MORTALS;
AND WHILST,
AS A MAN, A BRITON, AND A PATRIOT,
THOU READEST
THE MELANCHOLY NARRATIVE,
DROP A TEAR
FOR THY COUNTRY'S
LOSS.

At the bottom of the monument, in a compartment by itself,

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, October 13, 1783.

My dear Friend—I am much obliged to you for our American anecdotes, and feel the obligation erhaps more sensibly, the labour of transcribing eing in particular that to which I myself have the reatest aversion. The loyalists are much to be itied: driven from all the comforts that depend pon, and are intimately connected with, a resi-ence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a istant one, without the means of doing it, aban-loned too through a deplorable necessity, by the overnment to which they sacrificed all,* they xhibit a spectacle of distress, which one cannot iew, even at this distance, without participating n what they feel. Why could not some of our iseless wastes and forests have been allotted to heir support? To have built them houses indeed, nd furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expense; but I sup-

are the following four lines, in allusion to the brave Admiral Kempenfelt:—

"'Tis not this stone, regretted chief, thy name,
Thy worth, and merit shall extend to fame:
Brilliant achievements have thy name imprest,
In lasting characters, on Albion's breast."

* In the terms of peace concluded with America, the loyalists, who adhered in their allegiance to Great Britain, were not sufficiently remembered, considering the sacrifices they had made, and thus had the misfortune of being persecuted by America, and neglected by England.

pose the increase of population and the improvement of the soil would soon have been felt as a national advantage, and have indemnified the state if not enriched it. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that, compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake,* we sent them a ship-load of tools to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember too it was reported at the time that the court of Portugal accepted our wheelbarrows and spades with a very ill grace, and treated our bounty with contempt. An act like this in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little farther, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who, not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to such a matter, may not be aware of difficulties and objections, which they of the cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men proscribed by the Congress, might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a friend more powerful to avenge than

* This event occurred in the year 1756.

they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted loyalists. Their fears of arbitrary imposition were certainly well founded. A struggle therefore might be necessary, in order to prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contests beget aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates at last in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely that a country so distinguished by the Creator with every thing that can make it desirable should be given up to desolation for ever; and they possibly have reason on their side, who suppose that in time it will have the pre-eminence over all others; but the day of such prosperity seems far distant—Omnipotence indeed can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our reasonings by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself are constrained to do so.

I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle nations than I am; but, when I write to you, I talk, that is I write as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge myself in your debt for your last favour, but cannot pay you now, unless you

will accept as payment, what I know you value more than all I can say beside, the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Oct. 20, 1783.

My dear Friend—I have made a point of saying no fine things to Mr. Bacon,† upon an occasion that would well have justified them; deterred by a *caveat* he entered in his letter. Nothing can be more handsome than the present, nor more obliging than the manner in which he has made it. I take it for granted that the plate is, line for line, and stroke for stroke, an exact representation of his performance, as nearly, at least, as light and shade can exhibit, upon a flat surface, the effect of a piece of statuary. I may be allowed therefore to say that I admire it. My situation affords me no opportunity to cultivate the science of connoisseurship; neither would there be much propriety in my speaking the language of one to you, who disclaim the character. But we both know when we are pleased. It occurs to me, however, that I ought to say what it is that pleases me, for a gene-

* Private Correspondence.

† The celebrated statuary who executed the noble monument to the memory of Lord Chatham, in Westminster Abbey.

al commendation, where there are so many paricular beauties, would be insipid and unjust.

I think the figure of Lord Chatham singularly raceful, and his countenance full of the character hat belongs to him. It speaks not only great bility and consummate skill, but a tender and eartfelt interest in the welfare of the charge comitted to him. In the figure of the City, there is ll that *empressement*, (pardon a French term, it xpresses my idea better than any English one hat occurs,) that the importance of her errand alls for; and it is noble in its air, though in a osture of supplication. But the figure of Comerce is indeed a perfect beauty. It is a literal ruth, that I felt the tears flush into my eyes while looked at her. The idea of so much elegance nd grace having found so powerful a protection, as irresistible. There is a complacency and sereity in the air and countenance of Britannia, more uited to her dignity than that exultation and riumph which a less judicious hand might have ressed her in. She seems happy to sit at the feet f her deliverer. I have most of the monuments n the Abbey by heart, but I recollect none that ver gave me so much pleasure. The faces are all xpressive, and the figures are all graceful. If you hink the opinion of so unlearned a spectator worth ommunicating, and that I have not said more than Mr. Bacon's modesty can bear without offence, you re welcome to make him privy to my sentiments. know not why he should be hurt by just praise;

his fine talent is a gift, and all the merit of it is His property who gave it.

Believe me, my dear friend,
sincerely and affectionately yours,
W. C.

I am out of your debt.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 20, 1783.

I should not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions however are now at an end, and, addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene, in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather, and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fire-side in the winter. I mean however an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, but never less—at present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am however sadly at a loss for Cook's Voyage—can you send it? I shall be glad of Foster's too. These together will make

the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.

W. C.

The last letter contains a slight sketch of those happy winter evenings, which the poet has painted so exquisitely in verse. The two ladies, whom he mentions as his constant auditors, were Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen. The public, already indebted to the friendly and cheerful spirit of the latter, for the pleasant ballad of John Gilpin, had soon to thank her inspiring benevolence for a work of superior dignity, the masterpiece of Cowper's rich and fertile imagination.

This lady happened, as an admirer of Milton, to be partial to blank verse, and often solicited her poetical friend to try his powers in that species of composition. After repeated solicitation, he promised her, if she would furnish the subject, to comply with her request. "Oh!" she replied, "you can never be in want of a subject:—you can write upon any:—write upon this sofa!" The poet obeyed her command, and from the lively repartee of familiar conversation arose a poem of many thousand verses, unexampled perhaps both in its origin and excellence—a poem of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject and every style without any violation of harmony and order; which delineates nature, under her most attractive forms, and breathes a spirit of the purest and most exalted morality.

A great part of the "Task" appears to have been

composed in the winter—a circumstance the more remarkable, as the wintry months were generally unfavourable to the health of the poet. In the commencement of the poem, he marks both the season and the year, in the tender address to his companion.

> "Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
> Fast lock'd in mine."

Any circumstances which tend to illustrate the origin and progress of this poem deserve to be recorded with minute attention. We select a series of passages from Cowper's Letters to Mr. Bull, as affording this interesting information.

August 3, 1783.—"Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces which you have seen, we have not envied you; but we are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our green-house a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian;—a wilderness of sweets! The "Sofa" is ended, but not finished; a paradox, which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment. Do not imagine however that I lounge over it—on the contrary I find it severe exercise to mould and fashion it to my mind!"

February 22, 1784.—"I congratulate you on the thaw: I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the

better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable: what reason, therefore, have they to rejoice, who, being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour? The ice in my ink however is not yet dissolved. It was long before the frost seized it, but it at last prevailed. The "Sofa" has consequently received little or no addition since. It consists at present of four books and part of a fifth: when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but, if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance."

The following extract not only mentions the completion of his great work, but gives a particular account of his next production.

November 8, 1784.—"The Task," as you know, is gone to the press; since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which in a short time I design shall follow. It is entitled "Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools:" the business and purpose of it are to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors to their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor, where it is not; and, if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man as he to whom I am writing; some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few."

The reader will find the poet himself relating in more than one letter of the next year some parti-

lars of the time in which his great work "The Task" was composed. Writing to Mr. Newton, on the 20th of October, 1784, Cowper says of his "Task," then in the press, "I began it about this time twelvemonth." These words of hasty and imperfect recollection might give rise to a persuasion that this extensive and admirable production was completed in a year. But, as it is proved by the first extract from the poet's letters to Mr. Bull that the first book (entitled the "Sofa") was ended on the 3d of August, 1783, we may reasonably conclude that this interesting poem was begun in June or July. It was not imparted, as it advanced to any of the poet's confidential friends, except to the two ladies with whom he lived at the time of its commencement, and to his kind and sympathizing neighbour, Mr. Bull, who had shown his benevolent zeal in encouraging the spirit of Cowper to cheer and amuse itself in poetical studies. The final verses of "The Task" were probably written in September, 1784, as Cowper sent a transcript of the poem for the press to his favourite young friend, Mr. Unwin, early in October. His modest reserve appears very remarkable in his not having communicated this composition even to Mr. Unwin, till it was absolutely finished, and his tender delicacy of regard and attention to that young friend was amiably displayed in assigning to him the honourable office of revising and consigning to the press a work so important.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Nov. 3, 1783.

My dear Friend—My time is short, and my opportunity not the most favourable. My letter will consequently be short likewise, and perhaps not very intelligible. I find it no very easy matter to bring my mind into that degree of composure, which is necessary to the arrangement either of words or matter. You will naturally expect to receive some account of this confusion that I describe, some reason given for it. On Saturday night, at eleven o'clock, when I had not been in bed five minutes, I was alarmed by a cry of fire, announced by two or three shrill screams upon our staircase. Our servants, who were going to bed, saw it from their windows, and in appearance so near that they thought our house in danger. I immediately rose, and putting by the curtain saw sheets of fire rising above the ridge of Mr. Palmer's house, opposite to ours. The deception was such that I had no doubt it had begun with *him*, but soon found that it was rather farther off. In fact, it was at three places. Having broke out in three different parts, it is supposed to have been maliciously kindled. A tar-barrel and a quantity of tallow made a most tremendous blaze, and, the buildings it had seized upon being all thatched, the appearance became every moment more formidable. Providentially the night was perfectly calm, so calm that candles without lanterns, of which there were multitudes in the

* Private Correspondence.

street, burnt as steadily as in the house. By four in the morning it was so far reduced that all danger seemed to be over; but the confusion it had occasioned was almost infinite. Every man, who supposed his dwelling-house in jeopardy, emptied it as fast as he could, and conveyed his moveables to the house of some neighbour, supposed to be more secure. Ours, in the space of two hours, was so filled with all sorts of lumber that we had not even room for a chair by the fire-side. George —— is the principal sufferer. He gave eighteen guineas, or nearly that sum, to a woman, whom, in his hurry, he mistook for his wife; but the supposed wife walked off with the money, and he will probably never recover it. He has likewise lost forty pounds' worth of wool. London never exhibited a scene of greater depredation, drunkenness, and riot. Every thing was stolen that could be got at, and every drop of liquor drunk that was not guarded. Only one thief has yet been detected; a woman of the name of J——, who was stopped by young Handscomb with an apron full of plunder. He was forced to strike her down, before he could wrest it from her. Could you visit the place, you would see a most striking proof of a Providence interposing to stop the progress of the flames. They had almost reached, that is to say, within six yards of Daniel Raban's wood-pile, in which were fifty pounds' worth of faggots and furze; and exactly there they were extinguished: otherwise, especially if a breath of air had happened to move, all that side of the town must probably have been consumed. After

all this dreadful conflagration, we find nothing burnt but the out-houses; and the dwellings to which they belonged have suffered only the damage of being unroofed on that side next the fire. No lives were lost, nor any limbs broken. Mrs. Unwin, whose spirits served her while the hubbub lasted, and the day after, begins to feel the effect of it now. But I hope she will be relieved from it soon, being better this evening than I expected. As for me, I am impregnable to all such assaults. I have nothing, however, but this subject in my mind, and it is in vain that I invite any other into it. Having, therefore, exhausted this, I finish, assuring you of our united love, and hoping to find myself in a frame of mind more suited to my employment when I write next.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 10, 1783.

My dear William—I have lost and wasted almost all my writing time, in making an alteration in the verses I either inclose or subjoin, for I know not which will be the case at present. If prose comes readily, I shall transcribe them on another sheet, otherwise on this. You will understand before you have read many of them, that they are not for the press. I lay you under no other injunctions. The unkind behaviour of our acquaintance, though it is possible that in some instances it may not much

affect our happiness, nor engage many of our thoughts, will sometimes obtrude itself upon us with a degree of importunity not easily resisted, and then, perhaps, though almost insensible of it before, we feel more than the occasion will justify. In such a moment it was that I conceived this poem, and gave loose to a degree of resentment which, perhaps, I ought not to have indulged, but which in a cooler hour I cannot altogether condemn. My former intimacy with the two characters was such, that I could not but feel myself provoked by the neglect with which they both treated me on a late occasion.* So much by way of preface.

You ought not to have supposed that, if you had visited us last summer, the pleasure of the interview would have been all your own. By such an imagination you wrong both yourself and us. Do you suppose we do not love you? You cannot suspect your mother of coldness, and as to me, assure yourself I have no friend in the world with whom I communicate without the least reserve, yourself excepted. Take heart then, and when you find a favourable opportunity to come, assure yourself of such a welcome from us both as you have a right to look for. But I have observed in your two last letters somewhat of a dejection and melancholy, that I am afraid you do not sufficiently strive against. I suspect you of being too sedentary. "You cannot walk." Why you cannot is

* One of the characters here alluded to is evidently Lord Thurlow.

best known to yourself. I am sure your legs are long enough, and your person does not overload them. But I beseech you ride, and ride often. I think I have heard you say you cannot even do that without an object. Is not health an object? Is not a new prospect, which in most countries is gained at the end of every mile, an object? Assure yourself that easy chairs are no friends to cheerfulness, and that a long winter spent by the fireside is a prelude to an unhealthy spring. Every thing I see in the fields is to me an object; and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life with new pleasure. This indeed is partly the effect of a natural taste for rural beauty, and partly the effect of habit, for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it. I earnestly recommend a cultivation of the same taste to you, suspecting that you have neglected it, and suffer for doing so.

Last Saturday se'nnight, the moment I had composed myself in my bed, your mother too having just got into hers, we were alarmed by a cry of fire, on the staircase. I immediately rose, and saw sheets of flame above the roof of Mr. Palmer's house, our opposite neighbour. The mischief, however, was not so near to him as it seemed to be, having begun at a butcher's yard, at a little distance. We made all haste down stairs, and soon thre open the street door, for the reception of as much lumber, of all sorts, as our house would hold,

brought into it by several who thought it necessary to move their furniture. In two hours' time we had so much that we could hold no more, even the uninhabited part of our building being filled. Not that we ourselves were entirely secure—an adjoining thatch, on which fell showers of sparks, being rather a dangerous neighbour. Providentially, however, the night was perfectly calm, and we escaped. By four in the morning it was extinguished, having consumed many out-buildings, but no dwelling-house. Your mother suffered a little in her health, from the fatigue and bustle of the night, but soon recovered; as for me, it hurt me not. The slightest wind would have carried the fire to the very extremity of the town, there being multitudes of thatched buildings, and faggot-piles so near to each other, that they must have proved infallible conductors.

The balloons prosper; I congratulate you upon it. Thanks to Montgolfier, we shall fly at last.

Yours, my dear Friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Nov. 17, 1783.

My dear Friend—The country around us is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin,

* Private Correspondence.

where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds, and another at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice for depredation; S —— R——, for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was indeed wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman whom I mentioned before, who, it seems has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing apparel which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had William Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon it; but he good-naturedly, though, I think, weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs, the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipt, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed it,

had filled his left hand with red ochre, through which after every stroke he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable H——, who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to strike harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-end, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapt his face with a most Amazonian fury. This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle thrashed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing. Mr. Teedon has been here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for some left-off clothes. In answer to our inquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more

inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.*

Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that, let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough overhead. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be overhead, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt a night or two since, that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and with one flourish of my whip descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely

* A considerable fire occurred at this time in the town of Bedford, and thirty-nine houses were consumed, but it is said from accidental causes.

for the sake of having it to say, that they have made it.†

I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him.

Yours, my dear Friend,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Nov. 23, 1783.

My dear Friend—Your opinion of voyages and travels would spoil an appetite less keen than mine; but being pretty much, perhaps more than any man who can be said to enjoy his liberty, confined to a spot, and being very desirous of knowing all that can be known of this same planet of ours while I have the honour to belong to it,—and having, besides, no other means of information at my command—I am constrained to be satisfied with narratives, not always, indeed, to be implicitly depended upon, but which, being subjected to the exercise of a little consideration, cannot materially deceive us. Swinburn's is a book I had fixed upon, and determined if possible to procure, being pleased with some extracts from it which I found in the Review. I need hardly add, that I shall be much obliged to Mrs. Hill for a sight

† The discovery of balloons had attracted the attention of the public at this period, and various speculations were indulged as to the probable result.

* Private Correspondence.

. I account myself truly and much indebted to
lady for the trouble she is so kind as to take
ı my account, and shall esteem myself her debtor
ıll the amusement I meet with in the southern
isphere, should I be so fortunate as to get there.
reading is pretty much circumscribed both by
t of books and the influence of particular rea-
. Politics are my abhorrence, being almost
ys hypothetical, fluctuating, and impracticable.
osophy—I should have said natural philosophy,
ıematically studied, does not suit me; and such
bitions of that subject as are calculated for less
ıed readers, I have read in former days and re-
ıber in the present. Poetry, English poetry, I
ır touch, being pretty much addicted to the
ing of it, and knowing that much intercourse
ı those gentlemen betrays us unavoidably into a
t of imitation, which I hate and despise most
lially.

' *he* be the happiest man who has least money
ıe funds, there are few upon earth whom I have
occasion to envy. I would consent, however,
ıave my pounds multiplied into thousands, even
he hazard of all I might feel from that torment-
passion. I send nothing to the papers myself,
Unwin sometimes sends for me. His receptacle
ıy squibs is the Public Advertiser; but they are
r few, and my present occupations are of a kind
will still have a tendency to make them fewer.

Yours, my dear Friend,

W. C.

The neglect which Cowper had experienced from a high quarter seems deeply to have wounded his sensitive spirit, and to have dictated some of the remarks to be found in the following letter.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 24, 1783.

My dear Friend—An evening unexpectedly retired, and which your mother and I spend without company, (an occurrence far from frequent,) affords me a favourable opportunity to write by to-morrow's post, which else I could not have found. You are very good to consider my literary necessities with so much attention, and I feel proportionably grateful. Blair's Lectures, (though I suppose they must make a part of my private studies, not being *ad captum fœminarum*,) will be perfectly welcome. You say you felt my verses; I assure you that in this you followed my example, for I felt them first. A man's lordship is nothing to me, any farther than in connexion with qualities that entitle him to my respect. If he thinks himself privileged by it to treat me with neglect, I am his humble servant, and shall never be at a loss to render him an equivalent. I will not however belie my knowledge of mankind so much as to seem surprised at a treatment which I had abundant reason to expect. To these men, with whom I was once intimate, and for many years, I am no longer necessary, no longer convenient, or in any respect an object. They think of me as of the

man in the moon, and, whether I have a lantern or a dog and faggot, or whether I have neither of those desirable accommodations, is to them a matter of perfect indifference: upon that point we are agreed; our indifference is mutual; and, were I to publish again, which is not possible, I should give them a proof of it.

L'Estrange's Josephus has lately furnished us with evening lectures. But the historian is so tediously circumstantial, and the translator so insupportably coarse and vulgar, that we are all three weary of him. How would Tacitus have shone upon such a subject, great master as he was of the art of description, concise without obscurity, and affecting without being poetical. But so it was ordered, and for wise reasons no doubt, that the greatest calamities any people ever suffered, and an accomplishment of one of the most signal prophecies in the Scripture, should be recorded by one of the worst writers. The man was a temporizer too, and courted the favour of his Roman masters at the expense of his own creed, or else an infidel and absolutely disbelieved it. You will think me very difficult to please; I quarrel with Josephus for the want of elegance and with some of our modern historians for having too much—with him for running right forward like a gazette, without stopping to make a single observation by the way; and with them for pretending to delineate characters that existed two thousand years ago, and to discover the motives by which they were influenced, with the same precision as if they had been their contem-

poraries. Simplicity is become a very rare quality in a writer. In the decline of great kingdoms, and where refinement in all the arts is carried to an excess, I suppose it is always rare. The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day; and with respect to authors of the present era, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple.

Your mother wants room for a postscript, so my lecture must conclude abruptly.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Nov. 30, 1783.

My dear Friend—I have neither long visits to pay nor to receive, nor ladies to spend hours in telling me that which might be told in five minutes, yet often find myself obliged to be an economist of time, and to make the most of a short opportunity. Let our station be as retired as it may, there is no want of playthings and avocations, nor much need to seek them, in this world of ours. Business, or what presents itself to us under that imposing character, will find us out, even in the stillest retreat, and plead its importance, however trivial in reality, as a just demand upon our attention. It is

* Private Correspondence.

wonderful how, by means of such real or seeming necessities, my time is stolen away. I have just time to observe that time is short, and, by the time I have made the observation, time is gone. I have wondered in former days at the patience of the antediluvian world, that they could endure a life almost millenary, with so little variety as seems to have fallen to their share. It is probable that they had much fewer employments than we. Their affairs lay in a narrower compass; their libraries were indifferently furnished; philosophical researches were carried on with much less industry and acuteness of penetration, and fiddles, perhaps, were not even invented. How then could seven or eight hundred years of life be supportable? I have asked this question formerly, and been at a loss to resolve it; but I think I can answer it now. I will suppose myself born a thousand years before Noah was born or thought of. I rise with the sun; I worship; I prepare my breakfast; I swallow a bucket of goats'-milk, and a dozen good sizeable cakes. I fasten a new string to my bow, and my youngest boy, a lad of about thirty years of age, having played with my arrows till he has stript 'off all the feathers, I find myself obliged to repair them. The morning is thus spent in preparing for the chace, and it is become necessary that I should dine. I dig up my roots; I wash them; I boil them; I find them not done enough, I boil them again; my wife is angry; we dispute; we settle the point; but in the mean time the fire goes out, and must be kindled again All this is very amusing. I hunt; I bring home

the prey; with the skin of it I mend an old coat, or I make a new one. By this time the day is far spent; I feel myself fatigued, and retire to rest. Thus, what with tilling the ground, and eating the fruit of it, hunting, and walking, and running, and mending old clothes, and sleeping and rising again, I can suppose an inhabitant of the primæval world so much occupied as to sigh over the shortness of life, and to find, at the end of many centuries, that they had all slipt through his fingers, and were passed away like a shadow. What wonder then that I, who live in a day of so much greater refinement, when there is so much more to be wanted, and wished, and to be enjoyed, should feel myself now and then pinched in point of opportunity, and at some loss for leisure to fill four sides of a sheet like this? Thus, however, it is, and, if the ancient gentlemen to whom I have referred, and their complaints of the disproportion of time to the occasions they had for it, will not serve me as an excuse, I must even plead guilty, and confess that I am often in haste, when I have no good reason for being so.

This by way of introduction; now for my letter. Mr. Scott is desired by Mr. De Coetlogon to contribute to the "Theological Review," of which I suppose that gentleman is a manager. He says he has insured your assistance, and at the same time desires mine, either in prose or verse. He did well to apply to you, because you can afford him substantial help; but as for me, had he known me better, he would never have suspected me for a theologian, either in rhyme or otherwise.

Lord Dartmouth's Mr. Wright spent near two hours with me this morning; a respectable old man, whom I always see with pleasure, both for his master's sake and for his own. I was glad to learn from him that his lordship has better health than he has enjoyed for some years.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Dec. 15, 1783.

My dear Friend—I know not how it fares with you, at a time when philosophy has just brought forth her most extraordinary production, not excepting, perhaps, that prodigy, a ship, in all respects complete, and equal to the task of circumnavigating the globe. My mind, however, is frequently getting into these balloons, and is busy in multiplying speculations as airy as the regions through which they pass. The last account from France, which seems so well authenticated, has changed my jocularity upon this occasion into serious expectation. The invention of these new vehicles is yet in its infancy, yet already they seem to have attained a degree of perfection which navigation did not reach, till ages of experience had matured it, and science had exhausted both her industry and her skill in its improvement. I am aware, indeed, that the first boat or canoe that was

* Private Correspondence.

ever formed, though rude in its construction—perhaps not constructed at all, being only a hollow tree that had fallen casually into the water, and which, though furnished with neither sails nor oars, might yet be guided by a pole—was a more perfect creature in its kind than a balloon at present; the single circumstance of its manageable nature giving it a clear superiority both in respect of safety and convenience. But the atmosphere, though a much thinner medium, we well know, resists the impression made upon it by the tail of a bird, as effectually as the water that of a ship's rudder. Pope, when inculcating one of his few useful lessons, and directing mankind to the providence of God, as the true source of all their wisdom, says beautifully—

> Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
> Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.

It is easy to parody those lines, so as to give them an accommodation and suitableness to the present purpose.

> Learn of the circle-making kite to fly,
> Spread the fan-tail, and wheel about the sky.

It is certain at least that nothing within the reach of human ingenuity will be left unattempted to accomplish and add all that is wanting to this last effort of philosophical contrivance.* The approxi-

* What would Cowper have thought, if he had lived to see the modern invention of rail-roads, and the possibility of travelling thirty miles in one hour and twenty minutes, by means of the operation of steam?

mating powers of the telescope, and the powers by which the thunder-storm is delivered of its contents peaceably and without mischief, were once perhaps in appearance more remote from discovery, and seemed less practicable, than we may now suppose it to give direction to that which is already buoyant; especially possessed as we are of such consummate mechanical skill, already masters of principles which we have nothing to do but to apply, of which we have already availed ourselves in the similar case of navigation, and having in every fowl of the air a pattern, which now at length it may be sufficient to imitate. Wings and a tail indeed were of little use, while the body, so much heavier than the space of air it occupied, was sure to sink by its own weight, and could never be held in equipoise by any implements of the kind which human strength could manage. But now we float; at random indeed, pretty much, and as the wind drives us; for want of nothing, however, but that steerage which invention, the conqueror of many equal, if not superior, difficulties may be expected to supply. Should the point be carried, and man at last become as familiar with the air as he has long been with the ocean, will it in its consequences prove a mercy or a judgment? I think, a judgment. First, because, if a power to convey himself from place to place, like a bird, would have been good for him, his Maker would have formed him with such a capacity. But he has been a groveller upon the earth for six thousand years, and now at last, when the close of this present state of things approaches, begins to exalt himself above it. So

much the worse for *him*. Like a truant school-boy, he breaks his bounds, and will have reason to repent of his presumption. Secondly, I think it will prove a judgment, because, with the exercise of a very little foresight, it is easy to prognosticate a thousand evils, which the project must necessarily bring after it; amounting at last to the confusion of all order, the annihilation of all authority, with dangers both to property and person, and impunity to the offenders. Were I an absolute legislator, I would therefore make it death for a man to be convicted of flying, the moment he could be caught; and to bring him down from his altitude by a bullet sent through his head or his carriage should be no murder. Philosophers would call me a Vandal; the scholar would say that, had it not been for me, the fable of Dædalus would have been realised; and historians would load my memory with reproaches of phlegm, and stupidity, and oppression; but in the mean time the world would go on quietly, and, if it enjoyed less liberty, would at least be more secure.

I know not what are your sentiments upon the subject of the East India Bill.* This, too, has fre-

* As repeated allusion is made to the affairs of the East India Company, by Cowper, in the following letters, for the information of those who may not be conversant with this subject, we add the following information.

The great abuses that were imputed to the system of government established in that country, where a company of merchants exercised the supreme sway, led Mr. Fox, in 1783, (the period in which he was a member of administration,) to introduce his celebrated East India Bill, in which he proposed to annihilate the charter of the Company, and to dispossess them of their

quently afforded me matter of speculation. I can easily see that it is not without its blemishes; but its beauties, in my eye, are much predominant. Whatever may be its author's views, if he delivers so large a portion of mankind from such horrible tyranny as the East has so long suffered, he deserves a statue much more than Montgolfier,* who, it seems, is to receive that honour. Perhaps he may bring his own freedom into jeopardy; but to do this for the sake of emancipating nations so much more numerous than ourselves is at least generous, and a design that should have my encouragement, if I had any encouragement to afford it.

We are well, and love you. Remember us, as I doubt not you do, with the same affection, and be

power. The measure passed in the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords; and royal influence was said to have been exerted to procure its rejection. The failure of this bill led to the dissolution of that administration, in the December of the same year. In the succeeding January of 1784, Mr. Pitt introduced his no less celebrated bill. Instead of going the length of violating the charter, granted in the time of William III., (the great defect attributed to Mr. Fox's preceding bill,) his object was to preserve it inviolate, but with certain modifications. The main feature in his plan was to separate the commercial from the territorial concerns of the Company, and to vest the latter in a Board, nominated by government; thus withdrawing from the East India Company the exercise of powers belonging only to the supreme authority. This bill, though more just and popular than the preceding, was nevertheless rejected by a majority of eight; but it was subsequently renewed, and carried, and is the origin of that Board of Controul which is now so well known, as superintending and regulating the concerns of our Indian empire.

* The inventor of balloons.

content with my sentiments upon subjects such as these, till I can send you, if that day should ever come, a letter more worthy of your reception.

Nous sommes les vôtres,

GUILLAUME ET MARIE.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Dec. 27, 1783.

My dear Friend—Thanks to the patriotic junto whose efforts have staved off the expected dissolution, franks have not yet lost their currency. Ignorant as they were that my writing by this post depended upon the existence of the present parliament, they have conducted their deliberations with a sturdiness and magnanimity that would almost tempt one to suppose that they had known it. So true it is that the actions of men are connected with consequences they are little aware of; and that events, comparatively trivial in themselves, may give birth to the most important.

My thoughts of ministers and men in power are nearly akin to yours. It is well for the public, when the rulers of a state are actuated by principles that may happen to coincide with its interests. The ambition of an individual has often been made subservient to the general good; and many a man has served his country, merely for the sake of immortalizing himself by doing it. So far, it seems to me, the natural man is to be trusted, and no farther.

* Private Correspondence.

Self is at the bottom of all his conduct. If self can be pleased, flattered, enriched, exalted, by his exertions, and his talents are such as qualify him for great usefulness, his country shall be the better for him. And this, perhaps, is all the patriotism we have a right to look for. In the mean time, however, I cannot but think such a man in some degree a respectable character, and am willing at least to do him honour so far as I feel myself benefited by him. Ambition and the love of fame are certainly no Christian principles, but they are such as commonly belong to men of superior minds, and the fruits they produce may often plead their apology. The great men of the world are of a piece with the world to which they belong; they are raised up to govern it, and in the government of it are prompted by worldly motives: but it prospers perhaps under their management; and, when it does, the Christian world, which is totally a distinct creation, partaking of the advantage, has cause to be thankful. The sun is a glorious creature; he does much good, but without intending it. I, however, who am conscious of the good he does, though I know not what religion he is of, or whether he has any or none, rejoice in his effects, admire him, and am sensible that it is every man's duty to be thankful for him. In this sentiment I know you agree with me, for I believe he has not a warmer votary than yourself.

We say the king can do no wrong; and it is well for poor George the Third that he cannot. In my opinion, however, he has lately been within a hair's-

breadth of that predicament.* His advisers indeed are guilty, and not he: but he will probably find, however hard it may seem, that if he can do no wrong, he may yet suffer the consequences of the wrong he cannot do. He has dismissed his servants, but not disgraced them; they triumph in their degradation, and no man is willing to supply their places. Must their offices remain unoccupied, or must they be courted to resume them? Never was such a distracted state of things within my remembrance; and I much fear that this is but the beginning of sorrows. It is not a time of day for a king to take liberties with the people: there is a spirit in the Commons that will not endure it; and his Majesty's advisers must be less acquainted with the temper of the times than it is possible to suppose them, if they imagine that such strides of prerogative will not be resented. The address will gall him. I am sorry that he has exposed himself to such a reprehension, but I think it warranted by the occasion. I pity him; but, king as he is, and much as I have always honoured him, had I been a member I should have voted for it.

I am obliged to Mr. Bacon for thinking of me. That expression, however, does not do justice to my feelings. Even with the little knowledge I have of

* This alludes to the influence supposed to have been exercised by the king against the passing of Mr. Fox's celebrated East India Bill; and to his having commissioned Lord Temple, afterwards Lord Buckingham, to make known his sentiments on that subject. This event led to the dissolution of the famous coalition ministry.

him, I should love him, had I no reason to suppose myself at any time an object of his attention; but, knowing that I am so happy as to have a share in his remembrance, I certainly love him the more. Truly I am not in his debt: I cannot say wherefore it is so, but certainly few days pass in which I do not remember *him*. The print, indeed, with which he favoured me, and which is always in my view, must often suggest the recollection of him; but though I greatly value it, I do not believe it is my only prompter.

I finish with what I wish may make you laugh, as it did me. Mr. Scott, exhorting the people to frequent prayer, closed his address thus:—"You have nothing to do but to ask, and you will ever find Him ready to bestow. Open your wide mouths, and he will fill them."

Mrs. Unwin is well. Accept an old but a true conclusion—our united love to you and yours, and believe me, my dear friend,

Your ever affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

No date.

My dear Friend—It is hard upon us striplings, who have uncles still living, (N. B. I myself have an uncle still alive,) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question; that I, for instance, should find in one page of your letter a hope that Miss Shuttleworth would

be of your party, and be told in the next that she is engaged to your uncle. Well, we may perhaps never be uncles, but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming, when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privilege of old age, and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies, to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments, if you please, to your sister Eliza, and tell her that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, a little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor is a young man, whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure-grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago I received an invitation, in the civilest terms, in which he told me that the next day he should attempt to fill a bal-

loon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was, however, flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us than we could possibly have expected, indeed rather more than of any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both, a large elm, in a grove that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and, running towards us in the rain, insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it, in a manner that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one. A few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going toward the house, and exchanged bows and curtsies at a distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into

the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the court-yard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily towards us. We made equal haste to meet him; he presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour; and, after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For, though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way; neither our house, furniture, servants, nor income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments; neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry. Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.*

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

The year 1784 was a memorable period in the life of the poet, not only as it witnessed the completion of one extensive performance, and the commencement of another (his translation of Homer)

* He afterwards succeeded to the title of Sir John Throckmorton.

but as it terminated his intercourse with that highly pleasing and valuable friend, whose unremitting attention and seasonable advice had induced him to engage in both.

Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with Lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord which his own pure heart had led him to suppose not speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin, though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the poet's new friend, and naturally became apprehensive of losing that influence which she had so long experienced over a man of genius and virtue, and that honourable share in his affections which she had previously enjoyed without the fear of witnessing its diminution.

Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt that he must relinquish that long-established friendship which had formed the delight and happiness of his past life, or the new associate, whom he cherished as a sister, and whose heart and mind were so peculiarly congenial with his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled magnitude and weight would not allow him to hesitate; with a resolution and delicacy that do the highest honour to his feelings, he wrote a farewell letter to Lady Austen, explaining and lamenting the circumstances that forced him to renounce the society of a friend, whose enchanting talents and kindness had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits and to the exercise of his fancy.

As Hayley's further account of this event is minute and particular, we shall present it to the reader in his own words.

"In those very interesting conversations with which I was honoured by Lady Austen, I was irresistibly led to express an anxious desire for the sight of a letter written by Cowper in a situation that must have called forth all the finest powers of his eloquence as a monitor and a friend. The lady confirmed me in my opinion that a more admirable letter could not be written; and, had it existed at that time, I am persuaded from her noble frankness and zeal for the honour of the departed poet, she would have given me a copy; but she ingenuously confessed that in a moment of natural mortification she burnt this very tender yet resolute letter. I mention the circumstance, because a literary correspondent whom I have great reason to esteem, has recently expressed to me a wish (which may perhaps be general) that I could introduce into this compilation the letter in question. Had it been confided to my care, I am persuaded I should have thought it very proper for publication, as it displayed both the tenderness and the magnanimity of Cowper; nor could I have deemed it a want of delicacy towards the memory of Lady Austen, to exhibit a proof that, animated by the warmest admiration of the great poet, whose fancy she could so successfully call forth, she was willing to devote her life and fortune to his service and protection. The sentiment is to be regarded as honourable to the lady; it is still more honourable to the poet that

ith such feelings as rendered him perfectly sensible f all Lady Austen's fascinating powers, he could eturn her tenderness with innocent regard, and yet esolutely preclude himself from her society when e could no longer enjoy it without compromising hat he owed to the compassionate and generous uardian of his sequestered life. No person can ustly blame Mrs. Unwin for feeling apprehensive hat Cowper's intimacy with a lady of such extraordinary talents might lead him into perplexities of which he was by no means aware. This remark was suggested by a few elegant and tender verses, addressed by the poet to Lady Austen, and shown to me by that lady.

"Those who were acquainted with the unsuspecting innocence and sportive gaiety of Cowper would readily allow, if they had seen the verses to which I allude, that they are such as he might have addressed to a real sister; but a lady only called by that endearing name may be easily pardoned if she was induced by them to hope that they might possibly be a prelude to a still dearer alliance. To me they appeared expressive of that peculiarity in his character, a gay and tender gallantry, perfectly distinct from the attachment of love. If the lady, who was the subject of the verses, had given them to me with a permission to print them, I should have thought the poet himself might have approved of their appearance, accompanied with such a commentary.

"In the whole course of this work I have endeavoured to recollect, on every doubtful occasion, the feelings of Cowper, and made it a rule to reject

whatever my perfect intimacy with those feelings could lead me to suppose the spirit of the departed poet might wish me to lay aside as unfit for publication. I consider an editor as guilty of the basest injury to the dead who admits into the posthumous volumes of an author, whom he professes to love and admire, any composition which his own conscience informs him *that author*, if he could speak from the tomb, would direct him to suppress. On this principle I have declined to print some letters which entered, more than I think the public ought to enter, into the history of a trifling feminine discord that disturbed the perfect harmony of the happy trio at Olney, when Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin were the united inspirers of the poet. Yet as the brief and true account which I gave of their separation has been thought to cast a shade of censure on the temper of Mrs. Unwin, which I was far from intending, in justice to the memory of that exemplary and sublime female friend, I here introduce a passage from a letter of Cowper to the Rev. William Unwin, honourable to both the ladies in question, as it describes them in a moment of generous reconciliation.

" 'I enclose a letter from Lady Austen, which I beg you to return me in your next.—We are reconciled. She seized the first opportunity to embrace your mother with tears of the tenderest affection, and I of course am satisfied. We were all a little awkward at first, but now are as easy as ever.'

" This letter happens to have no date, but the

expressions I have cited from it are sufficient to prove that Mrs. Unwin, instead of having shown an envious infirmity of temper on this occasion, must have conducted herself with a delicate liberality of mind."

We now enter upon the correspondence of the year.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 3, 1784.

My dear William—Your silence began to be distressing to both your mother and me, and had I not received a letter from you last night, I should have written by this post to inquire after your health. How can it be that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation, and mix with a variety of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials and yourself destitute? I assure you faithfully that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles as make letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice.

We have

> One parson, one poet, one bellman, one cryer,
> And the poor poet is our only 'squire.

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two letters from you than you one from me. The principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot

door being swelled by the thaw would do any thing better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts that we were immediately obliged to introduce a chirurgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a locked jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences however are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not perhaps be either so perspicuous or so diffuse on the subject of which you desire my sentiments as I should be, but I will do my best. Know then that I have learnt long since, of Abbé Raynal, to hate all monopolies as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large; consequently the charter in question would not at any rate be a favourite of mine. This however is of itself I confess no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it. But such reasons I think are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited if those conditions are exceeded; if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor? This appears to me to be no misrepresentation of their case, whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes

them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty; it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised, and, forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should even have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead —the right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance, that I have ever heard, consulting their interest or advantage. That government therefore is bound to interfere and to unking these tyrants is to me self-evident. And if, having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding on the legislature to resume it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But, suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance; never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such

a measure should be drawn into a precedent, unless it could be alleged, as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the Governors of the Bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately,

W. C.

TO MRS. HILL.*

Olney, Jan. 5, 1784.

Dear Madam—You will readily pardon the trouble I give you by this line, when I plead my attention to your husband's convenience in my excuse. I know him to be so busy a man, that I cannot in conscience trouble him with a commission, which I know it is impossible he should have leisure to execute. After all, the labour would devolve upon you, and therefore I may as well address you in the first instance.

I have read, and return the books you were so kind as to procure for me. Mr. Hill gave me hopes,

* Private Correspondence.

in his last, that from the library, to which I have subscribed, I might still be supplied with more. I have not many more to wish for, nor do I mean to make any unreasonable use of your kindness. In about a fortnight I shall be favoured, by a friend in Essex, with as many as will serve me during the rest of the winter. In summer I read but little. In the mean time, I shall be much obliged to you for Forster's Narrative of the same voyage, if your librarian has it; and likewise for "Swinburn's Travels," which Mr. Hill mentioned. If they can be sent at once, which perhaps the terms of subscription may not allow, I shall be glad to receive them so. If not, then Forster's first, and Swinburn afterwards: and Swinburn, at any rate, if Forster is not to be procured.

Reading over what I have written, I find it perfectly free and easy; so much indeed in that style, that, had I not had repeated proofs of your good-nature in other instances, I should have modesty enough to suppress it, and attempt something more civil, and becoming a person who has never had the happiness of seeing you. But I have always observed that sensible people are best pleased with what is natural and unaffected. Nor can I tell you a plainer truth, than that I am, without the least dissimulation, and with a warm remembrance of past favours,

My dear Madam,
Your affectionate humble servant,
W. C.

I beg to be remembered to Mr. Hill.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ.*

Olney, Jan. 8, 1784.

My dear Friend—I wish you had more leisure, that you might oftener favour me with a page of politics. The authority of a newspaper is not of sufficient weight to determine my opinions, and I have no other documents to be set down by. I therefore on this subject am suspended in a state of constant scepticism, the most uneasy condition in which the judgment can find itself. But *your* politics have weight with me, because I know your independent spirit, the justness of your reasonings, and the opportunities you have of information. But I know likewise the urgency and the multiplicity of your concerns; and therefore, like a neglected clock, must be contented to go wrong, except when perhaps twice in the year you shall come to set me right.

Public credit is indeed shaken, and the funds at a low ebb. How can they be otherwise, when our western wing is already clipt to the stumps, and the shears at this moment threaten our eastern. Low however as our public stock is, it is not lower than my private one; and, this being the article that touches me most nearly at present, I shall be obliged to you if you will have recourse to such ways and means for the replenishment of my exchequer as your wisdom may suggest and your best ability suffice to execute. The experience I have had of your readiness upon all similar occa-

* Private Correspondence.

sions has been very agreeable to me; and I doubt not but upon the present I shall find you equally prompt to serve me. So,

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Jan. 18, 1784.

My dear Friend—I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness, through which he has passed with weariness and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour than the poor consolation that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened, if, as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length and equally desolate should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice indeed that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophesy a new one similar to it.

I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure; and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you, that you did her no more than justice in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason why the Reverend Doctor, your prede-

cessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his great riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the church to be wealthy, at a time when churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of the magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 1784.

My dear William—When I first resolved to write an answer to your last this evening, I had no thought of any thing more sublime than prose. But before I began, it occurred to me that perhaps you would not be displeased with an attempt to give a poetical translation of the lines you sent me. They are so beautiful, that I felt the temptation irresistible. At least, as the French say, it was *plus forte que moi;* and I accordingly complied. By this means I have lost an hour; and whether I shall be able to fill my sheet before supper is as yet doubtful. But I will do my best.

For your remarks, I think them perfectly just. You have no reason to distrust your taste, or to

submit the trial of it to me. You understand the use and the force of language as well as any man. You have quick feelings, and you are fond of poetry. How is it possible then that you should not be a judge of it? I venture to hazard only one alteration, which, as it appears to me, would amount to a little improvement. The seventh and eighth lines I think I should like better thus—

> Aspirante levi zephyro et redeunte serenâ
> Anni temperie fœcundo è cespite surgunt.

My reason is, that the word *cum* is repeated too soon. At least my ear does not like it, and, when it can be done without injury to the sense, there seems to be an elegance in diversifying the expression, as much as possible, upon similar occasions. It discovers a command of phrase, and gives a more masterly air to the piece. If *extincta* stood unconnected with *telis*, I should prefer your word *micant*, to the doctor's *vigent*. But the latter seems to stand more in direct opposition to that sort of extinction which is effected by a shaft or arrow. In the daytime the stars may be said to die, and in the night to recover their strength. Perhaps the doctor had in his eye that noble line of Gray's,

> Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war!

But it is a beautiful composition. It is tender, touching, and elegant. It is not easy to do it justice in English, as for example.*

* The verses appearing again with the original in the next letter, are omitted.

Many thanks for the books, which being most admirably packed came safe. They will furnish us with many a winter evening's amusement. We are glad that you intend to be the carrier back.

We rejoice too that your cousin has remembered you in her will. The money she left to those who attended her hearse, would have been better bestowed upon you: and by this time perhaps she thinks so. Alas! what an inquiry does that thought suggest, and how impossible to make it to any purpose! What are the employments of the departed spirit? and where does it subsist? Has it any cognizance of earthly things? Is it transported to an immeasurable distance; or is it still, though imperceptible to us, conversant with the same scene, and interested in what passes here? How little we know of a state to which we are all destined; and how does the obscurity that hangs over that undiscovered country increase the anxiety we sometimes feel as we are journeying towards it! It is sufficient however for such as you and a few more of my acquaintance to know that in your separate state you will be happy. Provision is made for your reception; and you will have no cause to regret aught that you have left behind.

I have written to Mr. ——. My letter went this morning. How I love and honour that man! For many reasons I dare not tell him how much. But I hate the frigidity of the style in which I am forced to address him. That line of Horace,

Dii tibi divitias dederunt artemque fruendi.

was never so applicable to the poet's friend, as to Mr. ——. My bosom burns to immortalize him. But prudence says "Forbear!" and, though a poet, I pay respect to her injunctions.*

I sincerely give you joy of the good you have unconsciously done by your example and conversation. That you seem to yourself not to deserve the acknowledgment your friend makes of it, is a proof that you do. Grace is blind to its own beauty, whereas such virtues as men may reach without it are remarkable self-admirers. May you make such impressions upon many of your order! I know none that need them more.

You do not want my praises of your conduct towards Mr. ———. It is well for him however, and still better for yourself, that you are capable of such a part. It was said of some good man (my memory does not serve me with his name) "do him an ill turn, and you make him your friend for ever." But it is Christianity only that forms such friends. I wish his father may be duly affected by this instance and proof of your superiority to those ideas of you which he has so unreasonably harboured. He is not in my favour now, nor will be upon any other terms.

I laughed at the comments you make on your own feelings, when the subject of them was a newspaper eulogium. But it was a laugh of pleasure, and approbation: such indeed is the heart, and so

* John Thornton, Esq. seems to be the person here alluded to.

is it made up. There are few that can do good, and keep their own secret, none perhaps without a struggle. Yourself and your friend —— are no very common instances of the fortitude that is necessary in such a conflict. In former days I have felt my heart beat, and every vein throb upon such an occasion. To publish my own deed was wrong. I knew it to be so. But to conceal it seemed like a voluntary injury to myself. Sometimes I could, and sometimes I could not succeed. My occasions for such conflicts indeed were not very numerous.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Jan. 25, 1784.

My dear Friend—This contention about East Indian patronage seems not unlikely to avenge upon us by its consequences the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party; and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale, absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage,

and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country, to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable tyranny at home. That sort of tyranny I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more, bribing to the right and left, rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic and of no effect. I am the king's most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But, by his majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or of the simplicity of his views; and, if I were satisfied that he himself is to be trusted, it is nevertheless palpable that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred, and shall never wish prosperity to a party that invades it, and, under that pretence of patriotism, would annihilate all the consequence of a character essential to the very being of the constitution. For these reasons I am sorry that we have any dominion in the East; that we have any such emoluments to contend about. Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute, and such strug-

gles having been already made in the conduct of it as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that still greater efforts and more fatal are behind; and, after all, the decision in favour of either side may be ruinous to the whole. In the mean time, that the Company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the kingship is most deplorably evident. What shall I say therefore? I distrust the court, I suspect the patriots; I put the Company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business, and see no remedy of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East Indies.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

It was natural for Cowper to indulge in such a reflection, if we consider that in his time India presented a melancholy scene of rapine and corruption. It used to be said by Mr. Burke that every man became unbaptized in going to India, and that, should it please Providence, by some unforeseen dispensation, to deprive Great Britain of her Indian empire, she would leave behind no memorial but the evidences of her ambition, and the traces of her desolating wars.

Happily we have lived to see a great moral revolution, and England has at length redeemed her character. She has ennobled the triumphs of her arms, by making them subservient to the in-

troduction of the Gospel; and seems evidently destined by Providence to be the honoured instrument of evangelizing the nations of the East. Already the sacred Scriptures have been translated, in whole or in part, into nearly forty of the Oriental languages or dialects. Schools have been established, and are rapidly multiplying in the three presidencies. The apparently insurmountable barrier of caste is giving way, and the great fabric of Indian superstition is crumbling into dust, while on its ruins will arise the everlasting empire of righteousness and truth.

The following lines, written by Dr. Jortin, to which we subjoin Cowper's translation, were inclosed in the last letter.

IN BREVITATEM VITÆ SPATII, HOMINIBUS CONCESSI.

Hei mihi! Lege ratâ sol occidit atque resurgit,
Lunaque mutatæ reparat dispendia formæ,
Astraque, purpurei telis extincta diei,
Rursus nocte vigent. Humiles telluris alumni,
Graminis herba virens, et florum picta propago,
Quos crudelis hyems lethali tabe peredit,
Cum zephyri vox blanda vocat, rediitque sereni
Temperies anni, fœcundo é cespite surgunt.
Nos domini rerum, nos, magna et pulchra minati,
Cum breve ver vitæ robustaque transiit ætas,
Deficimus; nec nos ordo revolubilis auras
Reddit in ætherias, tumuli neque claustra resolvit.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

Suns that set, and moons that wane,
Rise, and are restored again.
Stars, that orient day subdues,
Night at her return renews.

Herbs and flowers, the beauteous birth
Of the genial womb of earth,
Suffer but a transient death
From the winter's cruel breath.
Zephyr speaks; serener skies
Warm the glebe, and they arise.
We, alas! earth's haughty kings,
We, that promise mighty things,
Losing soon life's happy prime,
Droop, and fade, in little time.
Spring returns, but not our bloom,
Still 'tis winter in the tomb.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 1784.

My dear Friend—I am glad that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue.* Your reason for not proceeding was, however, such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your spirit should be betrayed into acrimony, in writing upon such a subject." I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point, and indeed at the time I could not discover that you had failed in it. I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto. The motto you mention is certainly apposite. But I think it an objection that it has been so much in use; almost every writer that has claimed a liberty to think for himself, upon whatever subject, having chosen it. therefore send you one which I never saw in that

* The "Review of Ecclesiastical History."

shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper. The Greek word δεσμὸς, which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind. It seems therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no misnomer of your book to call it—

Μισοδεσμος.

The following pleases me most of all the mottoes I have thought of. But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure.

Querelis
Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas.
Æn. X. 94.

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard, of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of a poet. Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection. It is possible too that I may live to be once more a publisher myself; in which case, I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own. At present, however, I have nothing that would be of use to him, nor have I many opportunities of composing, Sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone.

I am at this moment pinched for time, but was desirous of proving to you with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey

you, and therefore, by the first post, have to the best of my ability complied with your request.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 10, 1784.

My dear Friend—The morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers, the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of puncturing ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But, on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impres-

sions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery, but physicians I presume they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season, and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose, if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices and enfeebling self-indulgence of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self—a man, indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me—a man who sighs and groans, who wears out life in dejection and op-

pression of spirits, and who never thinks of the Aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But, if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution, and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to be than I. Upon my hypothesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam

down to me; at least, if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Feb. 1784.

My dear Friend—I give you joy of a thaw that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks' continuance with very little interruption; the longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well apprised of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it, as myself. It is I suppose every where felt as a blessing, but no where more sensibly than at Olney; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must therefore be observed with the same attention. He however is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself

in fruitless wishes. At the same time I confess it is a consolation, and I feel it an honour, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted as the dispenser, of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all that could partake of it from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers. I take it for granted that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of my documents. But if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified, I take courage; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain; that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Vil-

lain and rascal are appellations which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct, and the rather because I feel myself much inclined to believe that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think that secret influence is a bugbear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose, the mere *shibboleth* of a party:* and being, and having always been, somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty, I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it.

Caraccioli upon the subject of self-acquaintance was never I believe translated. I have sometimes thought that the Theological Miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work which I much admire. You, who are master of their plan, can tell me whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances; and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

* The secret influence, here mentioned, was at this time, and often afterwards, said to be employed by the Court; and, being highly unconstitutional, was frequently adverted to, in strong language of reprehension, in the House of Commons. Mr. Powys, afterwards Lord Lilford, called it "*a fourth estate in the realm;*" and Mr. Burke denominated it "*a power behind the throne, greater than the throne itself.*"

Remember us as those that love you, and are never unmindful of you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Olney, Feb. 22, 1784.

My dear Friend—I owe you thanks for your kind remembrance of me in your letter sent me on occasion of your departure, and as many for that which I received last night. I should have answered, had I known where a line or two from me might find you; but, uncertain whether you were at home or abroad, my diligence I confess wanted the necessary spur.

It makes a capital figure among the comforts we enjoyed during the long severity of the season, that the same *incognito* to all except ourselves made us his almoners this year likewise, as he did the last, and to the same amount. Some we have been enabled I suppose to save from perishing, and certainly many from the most pinching necessity.

Are you not afraid, Tory as you are, to avow your principles to me, who am a Whig? Know that I am in the opposition; that, though I pity the king, I do not wish him success in the present contest.†

* Private Correspondence.

† This alludes to Mr. Pitt being retained in office, though frequently outvoted in Parliament.

But this is too long a battle to fight upon paper. Make haste that we may decide it face to face.

Our respects wait upon Mrs. Bull, and our love upon the young Hebræan.* I wish you joy of his proficiency, and am glad that you can say, with the old man in Terence,

> Omnes continuò laudare fortunas meas,
> Qui natum habeam tali ingenio præditum.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Feb. 29, 1784.

My dear Friend—We are glad that you have such a Lord Petre in your neighbourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further acquaintance with him, not doubting that the more he knows you, he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary, for want of certain rhythmical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honour may await you. Seriously, however, I respect his character, and should not be sorry if there were many such Papists in the land.

* Mr. Bull's son, who afterwards succeeded his father, both in the ministerial office, and also in the seminary established at Newport Pagnel, and with no less claim to respect and esteem.

Mr. ——— has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same amount, accompanied indeed with an intimation that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is that next winter we are to expect nothing. But the man, and his beneficent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to hope that logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your letter again, I perceive that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his lordship. Had I forgot to tell you that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore that I happened to cast my eye upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing is so apt to betray us into absurdity as too great a dread of it; and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little: but you have escaped very well. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself deprived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen

blunders, which in a common case I should not have committed, and have no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I recollect how much better I could have made it; how easily and genteelly I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable awkwardness of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what, and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's Prefaces every night, except when the newspaper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition with a newspaper; or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis.

W. C.

I am so disgusted with ———, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not choose to express my feelings. Woe to the man whom kindness cannot soften!

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 8, 1784.

My dear Friend—I thank you for the two first numbers of the Theological Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but sufficiently to observe that they are much indebted to Omicron. An essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall be glad if a neighbour of ours, to whom

I have lent them, should be able to apply to his own use the lesson it inculcates. On farther consideration, I have seen reason to forego my purpose of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more calculated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforce a conviction of the vanity of all pursuits that have not the soul's interests for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manner of instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours would escape nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages of evangelical ordinances and Christian communion, he falls into a mistake, natural in his situation, ascribing always the pleasures he found in a holy life, to his own industrious perseverance in a contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of the great Comforter of his people, and directing the eye of his readers to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in the soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, and not to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen under Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a charming writer, and by those who know how to make such allowances may be read with great delight and improvement. But, with these defects in his manner, though, I believe, no man ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dressed with sufficient exactness to be fit for the public eye, where man is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all. He must therefore be dismissed, as an unsuccessful candidate for a place in this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected in the first instance than if he had

met with a refusal from the publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that, when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 11, 1784.

I return you many thanks for your Apology, which I have read with great pleasure. You know of old that your style always pleases me; and having, in a former letter, given you the reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit too in which you write pleases me as much. But I perceive that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases, I suppose, where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions truth itself seems a satire, because by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason perhaps you will find that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert and to prove that an enlightened minister of the gospel may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the Establishment, and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of

some dissenting doctors; and, to nettle them still more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole, however, I have no doubt that your Apology will do good. If it should irritate some who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy in the ministry of a church of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

The patronage of the East Indies will be a dangerous weapon, in whatever hands. I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side, in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free; and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast, and be no man's slave, than wear a chain, and drink tea.

I have just room to add that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate, William and Mary.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, March 15, 1784.

My dear Friend—I converse, you say, upon other subjects than that of despair, and may therefore write upon others. Indeed, my friend, I am a man of very little conversation upon any subject. From that of despair I abstain as much as possible, for the sake of my company; but I will venture to say that it is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day. I do not mean to say that I am never cheerful. I am often so: always indeed when my nights have been undisturbed for a season. But the effect of such continual listening to the language of a heart hopeless and deserted is that I can never give much more than half my attention to what is started by others, and very rarely start any thing myself. My silence, however, and my absence of mind, make me sometimes as entertaining as if I had wit. They furnish an occasion for friendly and good-natured raillery; they raise a laugh, and I partake of it. But you will easily perceive that a mind thus occupied is but indifferently qualified for the consideration of theological matters. The most useful and the most delightful topics of that kind are to me forbidden fruit;—I tremble if I approach them. It has happened to me sometimes that I have found myself imperceptibly drawn in, and made a party in such discourse. The consequence has been, dissatisfaction and self-reproach. You will tell me,

* Private Correspondence.

perhaps, that I have written upon these subjects in verse, and may therefore, if I please, in prose. But there is a difference. The search after poetical expression, the rhyme, and the numbers, are all affairs of some difficulty; they amuse indeed, but are not to be attained without study, and engross, perhaps, a larger share of the attention than the subject itself. Persons fond of music will sometimes find pleasure in the tune, when the words afford them none. There are, however, subjects that do not always terrify me by their importance; such I mean as relate to Christian life and manners; and when such an one presents itself, and finds me in a frame of mind that does not absolutely forbid the employment, I shall most readily give it my attention, for the sake, however, of your request merely. Verse is my favourite occupation, and what I compose in that way I reserve for my own use hereafter.

I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson's Prefaces, or Lives of the Poets. In all that number I observe but one man—a poet of no great fame—of whom I did not know that he existed till I found him there, whose mind seems to have had the slightest tincture of religion; and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. He sunk into a state of melancholy, and died young. Not long before his death he was found at his lodgings in Islington, by his biographer, with the New Testament in his hand. He said to Johnson, "I have but one book, but it is the best." Of him, therefore, there are some hopes. But from the lives of all the rest there

is but one inference to be drawn—that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people.

Yours, my dear friend, truly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 19, 1784.

My dear Friend—I wish it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli. Some years since I saw a short history of him in the 'Review,' of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for aught I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance, and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman. Had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his style that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic, if it were occasional only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affecting. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps therefore I may describe it better by saying that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least

is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud or the entertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can for the end of this second winter.

Yours,
My dear friend,
W. C.

The following letter will be read with interest as expressing Cowper's sentiments on Dr. Johnson's "Lives of the Poets."

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*

Olney, March 21, 1784

My dear William—I thank you for the entertainment you have afforded me. I often wish for a library, often regret my folly in selling a good collection, but I have one in Essex. It is rather

* Private Correspondence.

remote indeed, too distant for occasional reference; but it serves the purpose of amusement, and, a waggon being a very suitable vehicle for an author, I find myself commodiously supplied. Last night I made an end of reading "Johnson's Prefaces;" but the number of poets whom he has vouchsafed to chronicle being fifty-six, there must be many with whose history I am not yet acquainted. These, or some of these, if it suits you to give them a part of your chaise when you come, will be heartily welcome. I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon share of good sense, and his forcible expression, secure to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion upon all occasions where it is erroneous; and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but at the same time with a justness of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgment. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object rather than his critical performance. In the latter I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's Lycidas. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that, were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These indeed are the two capital instances in which he has offended me. There are others less important, which I have not room to

enumerate, and in which I am less confident that he is wrong. What suggested to him the thought that the Alma was written in imitation of Hudibras, I cannot conceive. In former years, they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them; but never saw in them the least resemblance to each other; nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure. After all, it is a melancholy observation, which it is impossible not to make, after having run through this series of poetical lives, that where there were such shining talents there should be so little virtue. These luminaries of our country seem to have been kindled into a brighter blaze than others only that their spots might be more noticed! So much can nature do for our intellectual part, and so little for our moral. What vanity, what petulance in Pope! How painfully sensible of censure, and yet how restless in provocation! To what mean artifices could Addison stoop, in hopes of injuring the reputation of his friend! Savage, how sordidly vicious! and the more condemned for the pains that are taken to palliate his vices. Offensive as they appear through a veil, how would they disgust without one! What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden; sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation. I know not but one might search these eight volumes with a candle, as the prophet says, to find a man, and not find one, unless perhaps Arbuthnot were he. I shall begin Beattie this evening, and propose to myself much satisfaction in reading him. In him at least I shall

find a man whose faculties have now and then a glimpse from heaven upon them; a man, not indeed in possession of much evangelical light, but faithful to what he has, and never neglecting an opportunity to use it! How much more respectable such a character than that of thousands who would call him blind, and yet have not the grace to practise half his virtues! He too is a poet and wrote the Minstrel. The specimens which I have seen of it pleased me much. If you have the whole, I should be glad to read it. I may perhaps, since you allow me the liberty, indulge myself here and there with a marginal annotation, but shall not use that allowance wantonly, so as to deface the volumes.

Yours, my dear William,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 29, 1784.

My dear Friend—It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As, when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like

manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element as shrimps or cockles, that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water-mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when, to our unspeakable surprise, a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys hallooed, and the maid announced Mr. G——. Puss* was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back-door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. G—— advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he, and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr.

* His tame hare.

A——, addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying that if I had any, I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr G—— squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribbon from his buttonhole. The boys hallooed, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself however happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued, and for which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons,* I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world, where one cannot exer-

* We have already stated that Mr. Pitt was frequently outvoted at this time in the House of Commons, but, being supported by the king, did not choose to resign.

cise any without disobliging somebody. The town however seems to be much at his service, and, if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. A——, perhaps, was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. G—— that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them.

Mr. S——, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and, had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April, 1784.

People that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But, for my own part, I

would sooner take Empedocles's leap, and fling myself into Mount Ætna than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy; it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But, had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that measure of it only which may be endured even in this life, the Christian world perhaps would have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous meddlers with the gospel would have been less frequently met with. The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! Every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other; but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cock-boat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, from this time forth for ever. There is a word that makes this world tremble; and the Pope

cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjurer! Pharaoh's conjurers had twice his ability.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

We have already alluded to this awful catastrophe, which occurred Feb. 5, 1783, though the shocks of earthquake continued to be felt sensibly, but less violently, till May 23d. The motions of the earth are described as having been various, either whirling like a vortex, horizontally, or by pulsations and beatings from the bottom upwards; the rains continual and violent, often accompanied with lightning and irregular and furious gusts of wind. The sum total of the mortality in Calabria and Sicily, by the earthquakes alone, as returned to the Secretary of State's office, in Naples, was 32,367, and, including other casualties, was estimated at 40,000.*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, April 5, 1784.

My dear William—I thanked you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you with more emphasis for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with—the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject and the leanest a feast

* See Sir William Hamilton's account of this awful event.

for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too that his own character appears in every page, and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer but the man; and that man so gentle, so well-tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him if one has any sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the Minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for, though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie. I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and, excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression and method contribute to make one. But, O the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Dr. Blair has such a brain as Shakspeare somewhere describes—"dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."*

I take it for granted, that these good men are

* This criticism on Blair's Lectures seems to be too severe. There was a period when his Sermons were among the most admired productions of the day: sixty thousand copies, it was said, were sold. They formed the standard of divinity fifty years ago: but they are now justly considered to be deficient, in not exhibiting the great and fundamental truths of the Gospel, and to be merely entitled to the praise of being a beautiful system of ethics.

philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language; and, if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis for want of better information. I should suppose for instance that man made his first effort in speech, in the way of an interjection, and that ah! or oh! being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent many names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An apple would consequently be called an apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would exclaim with a most moving pathos, "Oh apple!"—well and good—oh apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it, and *he* goes away with Oh apple in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting on his disappointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of transfer or gratuitous communication, and, the next occasion that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, "Oh give apple!" The apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and having satisfied his own hunger is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and a third person being present

he gives the apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify that he not only wants the apple to be given but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the apple, and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now, as my two syllable-mongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an opinion of my own, so different from theirs, who are so much wiser than myself, that, if a man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not Adam, on the very day of his creation, was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, April 15, 1784.

My dear William—I wish I had both burning words and bright thoughts. But I have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night and a melancholy day, and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give you as much as I can spare of the present evening.

Since I despatched my last, Blair has crept a little farther into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as, with so much knowledge, it is possible to be. His language is (except Swift's) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author than really tastes them, and who finds that a passage is praiseworthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism, in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should

have dealt in them more largely, had I read the books to myself; but, being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though, when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunder-storm in the first Georgic, which ends with

.... Ingeminant austri et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and therefore most striking. He therefore admires the effects of the thunderbolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression, and in the instance in question I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is per-

fectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such only as the word *ingeminant* could describe, and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the Æneid contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr. C—— has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: fear not—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words will come fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

The ingenuity and humour of the following verses, as well as their poetical merit give them a just claim to admiration.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*

Olney, April 25, 1784.

My dear William—Thanks for the fish with its companion, a lobster, which we mean to eat to-morrow.

* Private Correspondence.

) THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF THE HALYBUTT, ON WHICH I DINED THIS DAY, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1784.

Where hast thou floated, in what seas pursued
Thy pastime? when wast thou an egg new-spawn'd
Lost in th' immensity of ocean's waste?
Roar as they might, the overbearing winds
That rock'd the deep, thy cradle, thou wast safe—
And in thy minikin and embryo state,
Attach'd to the firm leaf of some salt weed,
Didst outlive tempests, such as wrung and rack'd
The joints of many a stout and gallant bark,
And whelm'd them in the unexplored abyss.
Indebted to no magnet and no chart,
Nor under guidance of the polar fire,
Thou wast a voyager on many coasts,
Grazing at large in meadows submarine,
Where flat Batavia just emerging peeps
Above the brine—where Caledonia's rocks
Beat back the surge—and where Hibernia shoots
Her wondrous causeway far into the main.
—Wherever thou hast fed, thou little thought'st,
And I not more, that I should feed on thee.
Peace, therefore, and good health, and much good fish,
To him who sent thee! and success as oft
As it descends into the billowy gulph,
To the same drag that caught thee!—Fare thee well!
Thy lot, thy brethren of the slimy fin
Would envy, could they know that thou wast doom'd
To feed a bard, and to be praised in verse.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April 26, 1784.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not ıdeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but

your accession to their party; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished. I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar that we seem to be conversing with an old friend upon terms of the most sociable intercourse while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man, indeed so amiable that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For, though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my observations into some method, but have not suggested many of which I was not by some means or other

previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originally beget authors, but authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments, and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and, having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified. They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries which propriety sets to fancy, and serving as judges to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers,

the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about, and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption: Mr. A——— was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him—he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his scull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it, and in five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend,

We love you, and are yours,

W. & M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, May 3, 1784.

My dear Friend—The subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals, and, secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or

not may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any farther than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either, that they intend a deception or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, as far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes; first, to the universal knowledge we have that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and, secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where, therefore, there is no wanton intention nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in

England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not. This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious till she attained an age that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive is certain; otherwise, why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character, and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic: and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty as well as her interest to comply; but I think he would not much consult his own for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more, and, in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case, however, can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here, and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themselves a better. But, even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one commonly uses both. Now all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned,

was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady C—— was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice as it obtains in England; and for a reason superior to all these I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person which such an artifice evidently betrays is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art: for, in the use of French women, I think it as innocent as in the use of the wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive, valeque.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, May 8, 1784.

My dear Friend—You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself,

and that both for my sake and your own; for your own sake, because it sometimes happens that, by assuming an air of cheerfulness, we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady, now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But, having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But buy it not. For, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last packet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any; for that to print only the original again would be to publish what has been hackneyed in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose; and if he thought him now too trite to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgment. I take it for granted therefore that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It

may spring from a principle of pride; but spring from what it may, I feel and have long felt a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine; and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever; not that I should ever have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of "The Task," I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content therefore with having laughed, and made others laugh; and will build my hopes of success as a poet upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of "The Task," and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and, on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken if "Tirocinium" do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned

before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination; and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should if possible be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you!

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances. Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, May 10, 1784.

My dear Friend—We rejoice in the account you give us of Dr. Johnson. His conversion will indeed be a singular proof of the omnipotence of grace; and the more singular, the more decided. The world will set his age against his wisdom, and comfort itself with the thought that he must be superannuated. Perhaps therefore in order to refute the slander, and do honour to the cause to which he becomes a convert, he could not do better than devote his great abilities, and a considerable part of the remainder of his years, to the production of some important work, not immediately connected with the interests of religion. He would thus give proof that a man of profound learning and the best sense may become a child without being a fool; and that to embrace the

* Private Correspondence.

gospel is no evidence either of enthusiasm, infirmity, or insanity. But He who calls him will direct him.

On Friday, by particular invitation, we attended an attempt to throw off a balloon at Mr. Throckmorton's, but it did not succeed. We expect however to be summoned again in the course of the ensuing week. Mrs. Unwin and I were the party. We were entertained with the utmost politeness. It is not possible to conceive a more engaging and agreeable character than the gentleman's, or a more consummate assemblage of all that is called good-nature, complaisance, and innocent cheerfulness, than is to be seen in the lady. They have lately received many gross affronts from the people of this place, on account of their religion. We thought it therefore the more necessary to treat them with respect.

Best love and best wishes,

W. C.

We think that there must be an error of date in this letter, because the period of time generally ascribed to the fact recorded in the former part of it, occurred in the last illness of Dr. Johnson, which was in December, 1784. A discussion has arisen respecting the circumstances of this case, but not as to the fact itself. As regards this latter point, it is satisfactorily established that Dr. Johnson, throughout a long life, had been peculiarly harassed by fears of death, from which he was at length happily delivered, and enabled to die in peace. This happy change of mind is generally attributed to the Rev. Mr. Latrobe having attended him

on his dying bed, and directed him to the only sure ground of acceptance, viz. a reliance upon God's promises of mercy in Christ Jesus. The truth of this statement rests on the testimony of the Rev. Christian Ignatius Latrobe, who received the account from his own father. Some again assign the instrumentality to another pious individual, Mr. Winstanley.* We do not see why the services of both may not have been simultaneously employed, and equally crowned with success. It is the fact itself which most claims our own attention. We here see a man of profound learning and great moral attainments deficient in correct views of the grand fundamental doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine of the atonement; and consequently unable to look forward to eternity without alarm. We believe this state of mind to be peculiar to many who are distinguished by genius and learning. The gospel, clearly understood in its design, as a revelation of mercy to every penitent and believing sinner, and cordially received into the heart, dispels these fears, and by directing the eye of faith to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, will infallibly fill the mind with that blessed hope which is full of life and immortality.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, May 22, 1784.

My dear Friend—I am glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion

* *See* "*Christian* Observer," Jan. 1835.

of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that, not having the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me, that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom shew mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgment, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can, I imagine, without much difficulty, convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can very easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present, however, I am not surprised that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us since I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints. But we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the Society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them

honour; for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, June 5, 1784.

When you told me that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Doctor Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book and the business, I inferred from that expression that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently that he had a right to thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now, were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no other way anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you and some others had given a favourable one, than it was natural I should be, knowing as I did that his opinion had been consulted.

I am affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, June 21, 1784.

My dear Friend—We are much pleased with your designed improvement of the late preposterous celebration, and have no doubt that in good hands the foolish occasion will turn to good account. A religious service, instituted in honour of a musician, and performed in the house of God, is a subject that calls loudly for the animadversion of an enlightened minister; and would be no mean one for a satirist, could a poet of that description be found spiritual enough to feel and to resent the profanation. It is reasonable to suppose that in the next year's almanack we shall find the name of Handel among the red-lettered worthies, for it would surely puzzle the Pope to add any thing to his canonization.

This unpleasant summer makes me wish for winter. The gloominess of that season is the less felt, both because it is expected, and because the days are short. But such weather, when the days are longest, makes a double winter, and my spirits feel that it does. We have now frosty mornings, and so cold a wind that even at high noon we have been obliged to break off our walk in the southern side of the garden, and seek shelter, I in the green-house, and Mrs. Unwin by the fire-side. Haymaking begins here to-morrow, and would have begun sooner, had the weather permitted it.

Mr. Wright called upon us last Sunday. The old gentleman seems happy in being exempted from the

* Private Correspondence.

effects of time to such a degree that, though we meet but once in the year, I cannot perceive that the twelve months that have elapsed have made any change in him. It seems, however, that, as much as he loves his master, and as easy as I suppose he has always found his service, he now and then heaves a sigh for liberty, and wishes to taste it before he dies. But his wife is not so minded. She cannot leave a family, the sons and daughters of which seem all to be her own. Her brother died lately in the East Indies, leaving twenty thousand pounds behind him, and half of it to her; but the ship that was bringing home this treasure is supposed to be lost. Her husband appears perfectly unaffected by the misfortune, and she perhaps may even be glad of it. Such an acquisition would have forced her into a state of independence, and made her her own mistress, whether she would or not. I charged him with a petition to Lord Dartmouth to send me Cook's last Voyage, which I have a great curiosity to see, and no other means of procuring. I dare say I shall obtain the favour, and have great pleasure in taking my last trip with a voyager whose memory I respect so much. Farewell, my dear friend: our affectionate remembrances are faithful to you and yours.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*

Olney, July 3, [probably 1784.]

My dear Friend—I am writing in the green-

* Private Correspondence.

house for retirement sake, where I shiver with cold on this present third of July. Summer and winter therefore do not depend on the position of the sun with respect to the earth, but on His appointment who is sovereign in all things. Last Saturday night the cold was so severe that it pinched off many of the young shoots of our peach-trees. The nurseryman we deal with informs me that the wall-trees are almost every where cut off; and that a friend of his, near London, has lost all the full-grown fruit-trees of an extensive garden. The very walnuts, which are now no bigger than small hazel-nuts, drop to the ground; and the flowers, though they blow, seem to have lost all their odours. I walked with your mother yesterday in the garden, wrapped up in a winter surtout, and found myself not at all incumbered by it; not more indeed than I was in January. Cucumbers contract that spot which is seldom found upon them except late in the autumn; and melons hardly grow. It is a comfort however to reflect that, if we cannot have these fruits in perfection, neither do we want them. Our crops of wheat are said to be very indifferent; the stalks of an unequal height, so that some of the ears are in danger of being smothered by the rest; and the ears, in general, lean and scanty. I never knew a summer in which we had not now and then a cold day to conflict with; but such a wintry fortnight as the last, at this season of the year, I never remember. I fear you have made a discovery of the webs you mention a day too late. The vermin have probably by this time left them, and may laugh at all human

attempts to destroy them. For every web they have hung upon the trees and bushes this year, you will next year probably find fifty, perhaps a hundred. Their increase is almost infinite; so that, if Providence does not interfere, and man see fit to neglect them, the laughers you mention may live to be sensible of their mistake.

Love to all.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, July 5, 1784.

My dear Friend—A dearth of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part, and must be, uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justice of these reasons for the present; and, if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation: during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the

rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems, however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence, that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of the Lethe, giving his reader, at the same time, cause to suspect that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness, that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusinian mysteries. Yet we know that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as

unworthy to be esteemed divine, as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting, hypocritical professor.*

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that, were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum, if, after advertising a month in the Gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man who cares about him or his measures so little as I do. When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But, at the best, I fear that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

> Si Pergama dextrâ
> Defendi possent, etiàm hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them.

* Some of the learned have been inclined to believe that the Eleusinian mysteries inculcated a rejection of the absurd mythology of those times, and a belief in one Great Supreme Being.

The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says indeed that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated, it seems to amount to this—"Make the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they buy none, the tax, as to them, will be annihilated." True. But in the mean time they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer when the hours in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end; but I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrûm.

Yours, affectionately,
W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 12, 1784.

My dear William—I think with you that Vinny's* line is not pure. If he knew any authority that

* Vincent Bourne.

would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin; but I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato;

Or,

Basia quæ juveni indulsit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua.

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus managed, will connect itself with them easily and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression

made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last "Review," but, dipping into it, I accidentally fell upon their account of "Hume's Essay on Suicide." I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author, whom they so much admire. I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors, as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others, with such palpable sophistry as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion, that, because it would be no sin to divert the course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also. For the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country than the course of that river to the regions through which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks, to all generations. But the life of a man and the water of a river can never come into competition with

each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of the classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A "Virgil," the property of Mr. S——, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 13, 1784.

My dear William—We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and, though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that, having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him—let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary: it is rather strange that, at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one; and stranger still that, being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that, when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard,

and perhaps by a re-perusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life when we are best qualified to read them, when, the judgment and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have seen this month with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses he is jocular, and laughs, though, considering that wheels, and miles, and grooms were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provoked me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families he says will suffer little by it. Why? because they are so poor that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened; an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery seems worthy of a hero: but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all: a commodity being once made too expensive for their pockets will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice, therefore, O ye penniless! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but

your remaining halfpenny will be safe; instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candle-light, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and, while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember that the halfpenny which government imposes the shopkeeper will swell to twopence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight: I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card-tables. I wish, in short, that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine in Silver-end keeps an ass; the ass lives on the other side of the garden-wall, and I am writing in the green-house: it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, whether cheered by the fine weather, or some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts and hinders me; but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse for my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, July 14, 1784.

My dear Friend—Notwithstanding the justness of the comparison by which you illustrate the folly and wickedness of a congregation assembled to pay divine honours to the memory of Handel, I could not help laughing at the picture you have drawn of the musical convicts. The subject indeed is awful, and your manner of representing it is perfectly just; yet I laughed, and must have laughed had I been one of your hearers. But the ridicule lies in the preposterous conduct which you reprove, and not in your reproof of it. A people so musically mad as to make not only their future trial the subject of a concert, but even the message of mercy from their King, and the only one he will ever send them, must excuse me if I am merry where there is more cause to be sad; for, melancholy as their condition is, their behaviour under it is too ludicrous not to be felt as such, and would conquer even a more settled gravity than mine.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

The Commemoration of Handel, mentioned in the above letter, which was performed with great pomp in a place of religious worship, and accompanied by his celebrated oratorio of the Messiah, was considered by many pious minds to resemble an act of canonization, and therefore censured as profane. Mr. Newton, being at that time, rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, in the city, preached a course of sermons on the occasion, and delivered his sentiments on the subject of oratorios generally, but with such originality of thought in the following passage that we insert it for the benefit of those to whom it may be unknown. It is introduced in the beginning of his fourth sermon from Malachi iii. 1—3.

"'Whereunto shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?' I represent to myself a number of persons, of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerful-

ness as possible. Among other resources, they call in the assistance of music. And, amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one: they choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the groundwork of a musical entertainment: and, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The King, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, presents them with his goodness: undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message: he assures them, that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit: he points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted: and, in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and full pardon. But, instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music: and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion; accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility!"

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, July 19, 1784.

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such an humorous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences;

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of the last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking.*

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, July 28, 1784.

My dear Friend—I may perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington

* We presume that this is the same circumstance of which more particular mention is made in the beginning of the letter to the Rev. Mr. Unwin, p. 292.

without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance about three miles distant from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach and contemplate the Needle-rock; at least, you might have done so twenty years ago; but since that time I think it is fallen from its base and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will, perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But, as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the death, of the martyrs whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems however a step towards the truth to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you

would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them, that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But, whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind, my friendship for you indeed is as warm as ever: but I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them I shall rejoice.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved I suppose to do something. But, do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of your's and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately; but I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both.

We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C. & M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, August 14, 1784.

My dear Friend—I give you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured sculls and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road. Thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon and by some untimely stroke of misadventure; they have made wheels and horses so expensive that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no farther. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few even-

ings before their departure, entreated us, during their absence, to consider the garden and all its contents as our own, and to gather whatever we liked without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture we made our acquaintance with the island of Hapaee, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way, and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful that, without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this however have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters! How wonderful too that with a tub and a stick they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure! Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other: their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others

are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me, even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production and in transcribing it; I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however is not so unproductive of subjects of censure, but that it may probably supply me with some other that may serve as well.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

> Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara!
> Vectigal certum perituraque gratia FRANKI!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

We have elsewhere stated that the mode originally used in franking, was for the member to sign his name at the left corner of the letter, with the word "free" attached to it, leaving the writer of the letter to add the superscription at his own con-

venience. But instances of forgery having become frequent, by persons erasing the word "free," and using the name of the member for fraudulent purposes, a new regulation was adopted at this time to defeat so gross an abuse. In August, 1784, under the act of the 24th of George III., chap. 37, a new enactment passed, prescribing the mode of franking for the future as it is now practised.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, August 16, 1784.

My dear Friend—Had you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place and the amusements it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not however totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette; which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant, and, if I have not an hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse, a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up

a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose and as oft descended, and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up and came down no more. Like the arrow discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the most bloody war that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last Voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems that in some of the Friendly Isles they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. Oh! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage! The paper indeed tells us that the queen of France has clapped this king of capers up in prison, for declining to dance before her on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think that the durance he suffers would be well exchanged for a dance at Annamooka. I should however as little have expected to hear that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective as they are in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refine-

ment, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore that particular nations have a genius for particular feats, and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South-sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin at her brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am your

Affectionate friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Sept. 11, 1784.

My dear Friend—You have my thanks for the inquiries you have made. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in

which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping by the end of the month to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman street, but must beg that you will give me in your next an exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for, though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiæ of which I have made none; it is besides slavish work, and of all occupations that which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that, if he chooses to print it, it may go to the press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand two hundred and seventy-six. I imagine, therefore, that the whole contains about five thousand. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. ——, whom I had not seen many years. He introduced himself to us very politely, with many

thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks, when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well; and, when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind that knows this to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Sept. 11, 1784.

My dear Friend—I have never seen Doctor Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his Visions; I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Sept. 18, 1784.

My dear Friend—Following your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and, having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that, in my judgment of it, has been very un-

worthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting that, if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now.* You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser.

My green-house is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in the summer; when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower, in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive, I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa or of bears in Russia very pleasing, but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying

* He alludes to the new mode of franking.

of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common or in a farm-yard is no bad performer: and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously, however, it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits. And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in heaven, in those dismal

regions perhaps the reverse of it is found; tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both,

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Oct. 2, 1784.

My dear William—A poet can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town; which, whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance, and of a species peculiar to that composition; for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices to regulate the inflexions, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair that, in spite of grammarians, must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris*. For, I suppose, every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth. But

this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you till the thirteenth. I the rather think that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this that, in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—

Fit surculus arbor.

If you can put the author's name under it, do so—if not, it must go without one; for I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as I think, to a medal.

Mr. —— is a Cornish member; but for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it. But he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest Mrs. W——. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous ex-

pression, and, should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known therefore to the Alduses and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm that Mrs. W—— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she ever was there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be with propriety said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proof sheets hither and back again. They must travel I imagine by coach, a large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all, jointly and separately, as usual.

W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Oct. 9, 1784.

My dear Friend—The pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expense with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to

you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality. You complain of unconnected thoughts. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries and as honest as yours. The description of your meditations at least suits mine; perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for, when I ask myself, what was the last idea, (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy what was the last word,) I am not able to answer, but, like the boy in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that, the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, messieurs les philosophes, there are moments when, if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought and the consciousness of it seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however we may both be right; and, if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing that, though the soul be in herself an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle that is not

such makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly and without disguise; you must therefore either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is a human soul: a negative, that I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to-day.

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprise me of the safe arrival of Cook's last Voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in Saint James's Square. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that had preceded it. When he departed, he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return, he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been re-

stored, was magnified to an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing in short but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice or see that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind, I think, in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and, by suffering such honours to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege.*

* We subjoin the following note of Hayley on this subject: "Having enjoyed in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship the Resolution, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook in the affair alluded

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours,
My dear friend,
W. C.

Several of the succeeding letters advert to the poem of "The Task," and cannot fail to inspire interest.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Oct. 10, 1784.

My dear William—I send you four quires of verse, which, having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe however they are not very erroneous, though, in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on

to. From the little personal acquaintance which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted, under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty."

such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one and only one compliment, which was so justly due that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion, (I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton,) but the compliment I mean is to Mr. ——. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of!

What there is of a religious cast in the volume, I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons—first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance—and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lopez de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature; not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience; not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I varied as much as I could, (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string,) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because, at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible,) it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Oct. 20, 1784.

My dear William—Your letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgment,

and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and who is he that would not be mortified by the discovery that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem, however, which you have in hand, will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since I began a piece which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean that it shall pursue the track of the former. That is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first; and if, after seeing it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an i, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how to be occasionally merry. The

Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John, having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgment, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If, when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the ceiling, and cry, "Humph!" anticipate him, I beseech you, at once, by saying, "that you know I should be sorry that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me if I did not." But, that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nichols, I have heard, is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as learning; and I suppose that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you. He prints "The Gentleman's Ma-

gazine," and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not, give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors who can afford to publish at their own expense, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140.—Truth generally without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c. and a reader not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly and indeed easily doubt what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge that *grace*, in my use of the word, does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the scripture. Thence I take the word *grace*. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favour in the abstract has no other word in all our language by which it can be expressed.

Page 150.—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all.*—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed that a little unevenness of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect, used as I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked. Be pleased to alter for me

thus, with the difference of only one word, from the alteration proposed by you—

> We too are friends to royalty. We love
> The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
> And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails and all reptiles that spoil our crops, either of fruit or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity, must rather be singularly perspicuous, to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour, and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose that I have great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess, which the whole train of scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *alma mater*, and I have banged her too.

Lay yourself, therefore, under no constraints that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Oct. 22, 1784.

My dear Friend—I am now reading a book which you have never read, and will probably never read—Knox's Essays. Perhaps I should premise that I am driven to such reading by the want of books that would please me better, neither having any, nor the means of procuring any. I am not sorry, however, that I have met with him; though, when I have allowed him the praise of being a sensible man, and in *his* way a good one, I have allowed him all that I can afford. Neither his style pleases me, which is sometimes insufferably dry and hard, and sometimes ornamented even to an Harveian tawdriness; nor his manner, which is never lively without being the worse for it: so unhappy is he in his attempts at character and narration. But, writing chiefly on the manners, vices, and follies of the modern day, to me he is at least so far useful, as that he gives me information upon points which I neither *can* nor *would* be informed upon except by hearsay. Of such information,

* Private Correspondence.

however, I have need, being a writer upon those subjects myself, and a satirical writer too. It is fit, therefore, in order that I may find fault in the right place, that I should know where fault may properly be found.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Oct. 30, 1784.

My dear Friend—I accede most readily to the justice of your remarks, on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess, I believe, are seldom exhibited by a people who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement and profligacy are too nearly allied to admit of any thing so noble; and I question whether any instances of faithful friendship, like that which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves in the latter days of the empire. They had been a nation, whose virtues it is impossible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God than her cicisbèos and her fiddlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference whether a man be born under

a truth, which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie; or, if there be any difference between the cases, it seems to be rather in favour of the latter: for a false persuasion, such as the Mahometan for instance, may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly, by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly, we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being imprest by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty that will disgrace them for ever; for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am again at Johnson's, in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books and called "The Task." I began it about this time twelvemonth, and, writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half at one, and sometimes twohours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller, I suppose, will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocusses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first

opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! We are well, and love you.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 1, 1784.

My dear Friend—Were I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling as I do a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad, for your sake as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine as an argument that at least he was no loser by the former I collect from it some reasonable hope that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions) that your heart fluttered when you approached Johnson's door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the T———s; they will now know that you do not pretend to a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post to tell him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised and perhaps not pleased. But I think he

cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least injured by his reserve, neither should I, if he were to publish a whole library without favouring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship not to communicate, though there must be a friendship where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And, if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion that might still remain in it, that any man living is nearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong-box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an invisible closeness to the last; and the first news that either you or any of my friends would have heard of "The Task," they would have received from the public papers. But you know now that neither as a poet nor a man do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expense.

I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of Tirocinium) as fast as the muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. —— perhaps

you will not find it difficult to procure from him half-a-dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case they will all go to the post, filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry that "John Gilpin," though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him; the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottoes, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not I think fewer than half a dozen to his "Essays."

Adieu,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Nov. 1784.

My dear Friend—To condole with you on the

death of a mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd—rather therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure while you live a blessing vouchsafed to you so long, and I while I live must regret a comfort, of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and, when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement within one degree of solitude, and, being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course

of the winter or early in the spring. You will find it perhaps on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem in six books, called "The Task." To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called I believe "Tirocinium," on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Nov. 27, 1784.

My dear Friend—All the interest that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it as a certain truth that, whatever seeming defects in point of attention and attachment to you my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you enclosed, in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for

my title, not otherwise easily accounted for: secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenons and mortices, by which the several passages are connected and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus: and lastly, an extract, as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you; and, as I have admitted into my description no images but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But, the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him; subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants; and collaterally, and, as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the Universities. A letter, which appeared in the "General Evening Post" of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press as worthy of public no-

tice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censures of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a poem, called "Tirocinium," which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline that obtains in almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father where there is no real impediment, the expedient of a domestic tutor where there is, and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they cannot be conveniently educated at home. Mr. Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now I hope command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that (I dare say) you will wave your desire of it. A poem thus disjointed cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—*Nulla dies sine lineâ*—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly that, though more than once I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and, finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance

of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But I do not mean to write blank verse again. Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you and to Mr. Bacon for your kind remembrance of me when you meet. No artist can excel, as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is and must be amiable.

Adieu, my dear friend!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, 1784.

My dear William—The slice which (you observe) has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost before I began to write; but, being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard, or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a defect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would, without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompence I can make you for writing without a frank, is to propose it to you to take your revenge

by returning an answer under the same predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is the occasion following. In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of "Tirocinium," dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened, however, that the poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two-thirds of it are at this time fairly transcribed; an accident to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know, before they mount him, at what rate he will choose to travel. If he be indisposed to dispatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace; if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will be ready to attend you; for, without exerting any extraordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know that four lines of it were composed while I had a dose of ipecacuanha on my stomach; in short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses at the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets who have found cathartics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particularly brilliant. Dryden always used them, and, in commemoration of it, Bayes, in "The Rehearsal," is made to inform the audience that in

a poetical emergency he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprize, having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

My love to all your family.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Nov. 29, 1784.

My dear Friend—I am happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not at least disgust the public. For, though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that, for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause of being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event: it is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now is to give you information on the following subject:—The moment Mr. Newton knew (and I took care that he should learn it first from me) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you

were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmurs of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing however that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract, by way of specimen, or (which he should like better still) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons, (but especially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal than I would my house, if I had one; the merits of the structure in either case being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it,) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof-sheets I have absolutely, though civilly refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work; and to these I have added an extract as he desired; selecting, as most suited to his taste, the view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille.* We not only approve but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who connot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I can see in him that good sense and courage that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Dec. 4, 1784.

My dear Friend—You have my hearty thanks for a very good barrel of oysters; which necessary acknowledgement once made, I might perhaps show more kindness by cutting short an epistle than by continuing one, in which you are not likely to find your account, either in the way of information or amusement. The season of the year indeed is not very friendly to such communications. A damp atmosphere and a sunless sky will have their effect upon the spirits; and when the spirits are checked, farewell to all hope of being good company, either by letter or otherwise. I envy those happy voyagers,

* Private Correspondence.

who with so much ease ascend to regions unsullied with a cloud, and date their epistles from an extra-mundane situation. No wonder if they outshine us, who poke about in the dark below, in the vivacity of their sallies, as much as they soar above us in their excursions. Not but that I should be very sorry to go to the clouds for wit: on the contrary, I am satisfied that I discover more by continuing where I am. Every man to his business. Their vocation is to see fine prospects, and to make pithy observations upon the world below; such as these, for instance: that the earth, beheld from a height that one trembles to think of, has the appearance of a circular plain; that England is a very rich and cultivated country, in which every man's property is ascertained by the hedges that intersect the lands; and that London and Westminster, seen from the neighbourhood of the moon, make but an insignificant figure. I admit the utility of these remarks; but in the mean time, I say *chacun à son goût;* and mine is rather to creep than fly, and to carry with me, if possible, an unbroken neck to the grave.

I remain, as ever,

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Dec. 13, 1784.

My dear Friend—Having imitated no man, I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the disadvan-

tage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He that should write like either of them would in my judgment deserve the name of a copyist, but not a poet. A judicious and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner than verse in rhyme: and, why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible that, as a reviewer of my former volume found cause to say, that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the reviewer of this, whoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume that I gained by the last. As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident that gave birth to the poem; nor

s it appear to me that, because I performed more
n my task, therefore "The Task" is not a suitable
e. A house would still be a house, though the
ilder of it should make it ten times as big as he
first intended. I might indeed, following the
mple of the Sunday newsmonger, call it the
. But I should do myself wrong: for, though it
e much variety, it has I trust no confusion.

For the same reason none of the inferior titles
ly themselves to the contents at large of that
k to which they belong. They are, every one
them, taken either from the leading (I should say
introductory) passage of that particular book, or
n that which makes the most conspicuous figure
. Had I set off with a design to write upon a
iron, and had I actually written near two hun-
d lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the
, the gridiron should have been my title. But
Sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post, from
I addressed myself to the long race that I
conceived a design to run, it acquired a just
minence in my account, and was very worthily
sed to the titular honour it enjoys, its right
at least so far a good one, that no word in the
ge could pretend a better.

Time-piece appears to me, (though by some
ent the import of that title has escaped you)
e a degree of propriety beyond the most of
. The book to which it belongs is intended
ke the hour that gives notice of approaching
ment; and, dealing pretty largely in the signs

of the times, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the Paradise Lost, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it, but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken too if Shakspeare's Cleopatra do not call the asp by which she thought fit to destroy herself by the same name: but, not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are however without all doubt convertible terms. A worm is a small serpent, and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested but the most formidable of all.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

The passages alluded to by Cowper are as follows:—

> O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear
> To that false *worm*, of whomsoever taught
> To counterfeit man's voice; &c.
>
> *Paradise Lost*, book 9.

> Hast thou the pretty *worm* of Nilus there,
> That kills and pains not?
>
> SHAKSPEARE'S *Anthony & Cleopatra*, Act. 5.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Dec. 18, 1784.

My dear Friend—I condole with you that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail with a philosopher or two on board, but at the same time should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions at this season for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared however that the reviewers, or some of my sagacious readers not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind, and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might introduce friend to public notice as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a

tutor for his children: I therefore added the words, "And of his two sons only," by way of insinuating that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction which we are both of us incapable of deserving. But, the same caution not having appeared to you to be necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment that I paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place, then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quià* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were all five my school-fellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense and his unfeigned piety. For these causes, me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man who had been publicly traduced; and indeed the reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion, by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of

his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance, at least could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton that did not please me, and returned an answer to it that possibly may not have pleased him. We shall come together again soon (I suppose) upon as amicable terms as usual: but at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

Yours, with our love to you all,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Christmas-eve, 1784.

My dear Friend—I am neither Mede nor Persian, neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, and yet I can neither find a new title for my book nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am however willing to hope that when the volume shall cast itself at your feet, you will be in some measure re-

conciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the poem and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard any anecdotes of poor dying ——, that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking. That little, however, I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him how he found himself, he replied, "I am composed, and think that I may safely believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him in "The Northampton Mercury," But Christians, I suppose, have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely, of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit.*

W. C.

In reviewing the events in Cowper's Life, recorded in the present volume, our remarks must be brief. His personal history continues to present the same afflicting spectacle of a man, always struggling under the pressure of a load from which no

effort, either in himself or others, is able to extricate him. We know nothing more touching than some of the letters in the Private Correspondence, in reference to this subject;* and we consider them indispensable to a clear elucidation of the state of his mind and feelings. Their deep pathos, their ingenuous disclosure of all that he feels, and still more, of all that he dreads, the delusion under which the mind evidently labours, and yet the fixed and unalterable integrity of principle that reigns within, form a sublime scene that awakens sympathy and commands admiration. The impressive utterance of woe, in the case of Job, recorded in the sacred page, is powerfully embodied in the instance of Cowper:—"Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold."† And so will every sufferer come forth with equal triumph, where the mind is supported by the consciousness of its own integrity. It is the gold undergoing the process of refining in the fiery furnace. It may be inflamed, but it cannot be consumed. In the very moment that the sufferer is writing bitter things against himself, there is a divine power that knows how to "temper the wind to the shorn lamb," that has promised not to "bruise the broken reed" nor "quench the

* Especially the letters addressed to Mr. Newton.

† Job xxiii. 8—10.

smoking flax;" and that, in the deepest forebodings of real or imaginary ill, still exclaims, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." *

We postpone our remarks on the poetical distinction that Cowper had now attained, till we enter on the ensuing Volume.

* Isaiah xli. 10.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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